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# **The 2015-16 AmeriCorps Program Director Manual**






A Resource for State Program Directors

July 2015

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Available at <http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/manual.aspx>

# Introduction

## **Purpose of This Manual**

### **Federal Laws, Regulations and Provisions**

### **State Statute**

### **Grant Agreement with State Commission**

## Purpose of This Manual

*The 2015-2016 AmeriCorps Program Director Manual* has been specifically designed by the Serve Illinois Commission as a guide for those who administer Illinois AmeriCorps programs. This manual will assist in detailing the process for monitoring, supporting, and evaluating programs and, above all, for working collaboratively to make AmeriCorps programs in Illinois successful.

Please note that the information contained in this manual does not include all the legal requirements of an AmeriCorps grant. It does not constitute the Corporation for National and Community Service's official interpretation of factual or legal questions. Program directors or individuals with particular questions should consult the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12501 et seq.), the regulations issued under the Act (45 C.F.R. § 2500.1 et seq.), the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions and Grants Policy guidance, and relevant state law and regulations. If there is a conflict between the content of this handbook and the AmeriCorps provisions, the provisions are the controlling authority.

*The AmeriCorps Program Director Manual* has been developed to help those who are newcomers to their positions to gain a general understanding of the management functions for overseeing the AmeriCorps programs/sites and their portfolio. It is intended to:

- ☐ Provide a roadmap for AmeriCorps grantee/site management
- ☐ Lay out a typical administrator's general workload
- ☐ Illustrate legal requirements
- ☐ Show where there is both control and flexibility to shape each AmeriCorps program

It is important that sub-grantees become familiar with all the information contained in this manual. *The AmeriCorps Program Director Manual* will be revised as needed. Notice of revisions will be sent to each Illinois AmeriCorps Program Director and posted on the Serve Illinois website.

## Laws, Regulations, and Provisions

- National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended
  - (42 U.S.C. § 12501, et seq.) – Chapter 129 (approx. 95 pages)
- National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993
- Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009

For more information on laws: [www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation)

## Regulations

- 45 CFR Parts 2520 – 2550    **Corporation for National and Community Service Chapter XXV.**

*For more information on regulations:*

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/45CFR\\_chapterXXV.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/45CFR_chapterXXV.pdf)

## **Provisions**

- *2015-2016 AmeriCorps General Provisions*, including revisions/changes.

For more information on provisions:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-ameri-corps-grants>

## **State Statute**

Serve Illinois also operates under the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service Act (PA 98-0692). For more detailed information on this statute please visit:

<http://ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=3558&ChapterID=5>

## **Grant Agreement with State Commission**

Grant Agreement as executed and/or amended by both the program and the State Commission through the Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH).

# National Service and Serve Illinois

## **A History of National Service**

### **Corporation for National and Community Service Programs**

### **National Days of Service**

### **Organization**

#### **Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)**

#### **Serve Illinois Commission**

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

### **Collaboration**



## A History of National Service

In 1993, Congress enacted the National and Community Service Act, creating the Corporation for National and Community Service. President Clinton signed the legislation soon after, and AmeriCorps was launched the following year. In the 1997-98-program year, there were more than 40,000 members serving in all of the AmeriCorps programs, with approximately 15,000 of those in the Education Awards Program.

When faced with challenges, our nation has always relied on the dedication and action of citizens. The Corporation for National and Community Service carries on a long tradition of citizen involvement by providing opportunities for Americans of all ages to improve their communities through service. The following is a brief history of national service:

### 1910

American philosopher William James envisions non-military national service in his essay, "The Moral Equivalent of War." "...instead of military conscription, a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years as a part of the army enlisted against Nature, the injustice would tend to be evened out and numerous other goods of the commonwealth would follow."

### 1933-1942

Through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), created by Franklin D. Roosevelt, millions of young people serve terms of 6 to 18 months to help restore the nations' parks, revitalize the economy, and support their families and themselves. The GI Bill links service and education, offering Americans educational opportunity in return for service to their country.

### 1944

The GI Bill, officially known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, is created, linking service and education and offering Americans educational opportunity in return for service to their country.

### 1960s

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program (which today comprise National Senior Service Corps) are developed to engage older Americans in the work of improving the nations.

### 1961

President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, with authorizing legislation approved by Congress on September 22, 1961. President Kennedy says, "The wisdom of this idea is that someday we'll bring it home to America."

### 1964

As part of the "War on Poverty," President Lyndon B. Johnson creates VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), a National Teacher Corps, the Job Corps, and University Year of Action. VISTA provides opportunities for Americans to serve full-time to help thousands of low-income communities.

**1970**

The Youth Conservation Corps engages 38,000 people ages 14 to 18 in summer environmental programs.

**1976**

California Governor Jerry Brown established the California Conservation Corps, the first non-federal youth corps at the state level.

**1978**

The Young Adult Conservation Corps creates small conservation corps in the state with 22,500 participants ages 16 to 23.

**1980s**

National service efforts are launched at the grassroots level, including the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (1984) and Campus Compact (1985), which help mobilize service programs in higher education; the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (1985), which helps replicate youth corps in states and cities; and Youth Service America (1985), through which many young people are given a chance to serve.

**1989-1990**

President George Bush creates the Office of National Service in the White House and the Points of Light Foundation to foster volunteering.

**1990**

Congress passes, and President Bush signs, the National and Community Service Act of 1990. The legislation authorizes grants to schools to support service-learning (Serve America, now known as Learn and Serve America) and demonstration grants for national service programs to youth corps, nonprofits, and colleges and universities.

**September 1993**

President Bill Clinton signs the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, creating AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service to expand opportunities for Americans to serve their communities. VISTA becomes part of AmeriCorps.

**1994**

Congress passes the King Holiday and Service Act of 1994, charging the Corporation for National Service with taking the lead in organizing Martin Luther King Day as a day of service.

**September 1994**

The first class of AmeriCorps members (20,000 strong) begins serving in more than 1,000 communities. In swearing in the Americans, President Clinton says, "Service is a spark to rekindle the spirit of democracy in an age of uncertainty...when it is all said and done, it comes down to three simple questions: What is right? What is wrong? And what are we going to do about it? Today you are doing what is right--turning your words into deeds."

**1995**

A study commissioned by the IBM Foundation, the Charles A. Dana foundation, and the James Irvine foundation finds that every federal dollar invested in AmeriCorps results in \$1.60 to \$2.60 or more in direct, measurable benefits to AmeriCorps members and the communities they serve.

**April 1997**

The Presidents' summit for America's Future, chaired by General Colin Powell, brings together President Clinton, former Presidents Bush, Ford, and Carter, and Mrs. Reagan to recognize and expand the role of AmeriCorps and other service programs in meeting the needs of America's youth.

**1997**

AmeriCorps expands by introducing the Education Awards Program, which allows more organizations to join the service network--nonprofits, faith-based organizations, colleges and universities, welfare-to-work programs, and other groups.

President Clinton and former President George Bush announced the resumption of the Daily Points of Light Award.

**September 1998**

The fifth class of AmeriCorps members is sworn in, bringing in the total number of current and former members to more than 100,000.

**October 1999**

AmeriCorps celebrates five years and 150,000 members. General Colin Powell, Utah's Governor Mike Leavitt, Coretta Scott King, and Sergeant Shriver join President Clinton at the White House honoring the winners of the first All\*AmeriCorps awards.

**June 2000**

The Foster Grandparent Program recognizes its 35th anniversary. As the Senior Companion Program enters its 26th year of service, and RSVP look ahead to its 30th birthday in 2001, the three National Senior Service Corps programs engage more than 500,000 adults age fifty-five and older in sharing their time and talents to help meet local community needs.

**October 2000**

AmeriCorps\*VISTA commemorates 35 years of fighting poverty in America. Since 1965, more than 130,000 VISTA members have used a hands-on, grassroots approach to empower individuals and communities throughout the country. With this year's AmeriCorps class, funded with 2000 appropriations, more than 200,000 individuals will have served in AmeriCorps since 1994.

**January 2002**

In response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., President George W. Bush created the USA Freedom Corps. During his State of the Union address, he called upon every American to commit to least two years of their lives—the equivalent of 4,000 hours—to the service of others. Through the USA Freedom Corps, President Bush wants to help every American to answer the call to service by strengthening and expanding

service opportunities for them to protect our homeland, to support our communities and to extend American compassion around the world. The USA Freedom Corps includes AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Senior Corps, Learn and Serve America, Citizen Corps, and nationwide local volunteer opportunities.

**July 2002**

CNCS awards first Homeland Security grants to engage citizens in public health, public safety, and disaster relief and preparedness.

**2003**

President Bush creates the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation to find ways to recognize the valuable contributions volunteers are making in our Nation. The Council creates the President's Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service.

**December 2003**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reports that both the number of volunteers and the volunteer rate rose over the year ended in September 2003. About 63.8 million people did volunteer work at some point from September 2002 to September 2003, up from 59.8 million for the similar period ended in September 2002.

**January 2004**

AmeriCorps receives record funding increase to allow programs to grow to 75,000 members.

**2004**

AmeriCorps\*NCCC recognizes 10,000 alumni, 15.3 million service hours, 4,500 projects and 10 years of service during Legacy Weekends at all five campuses.

In recognition of its 40th anniversary, AmeriCorps\*VISTA commences a study of its alumni and the impact national service had on their lives.

More than 330,000 individuals have served through AmeriCorps.

During the past decade, more than 1 billion volunteer service hours have been generated by Senior Corps volunteers.

Senior Companion Program celebrates its 30th anniversary.

More than 1.8 billion high school students participate annually in service-learning initiatives funded by Learn and Serve America

**2006**

President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll launched by CNCS to honor the nation's top college and universities for their commitment to community service, civic engagement, and service-learning

**2007**

May: AmeriCorps celebrates its 500,000 member. First annual AmeriCorps Week launched.

**2009**

April: President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The Serve America Act reauthorizes and expands national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency created in 1993. The Corporation engages four million Americans in result-driven service each year, including 75,000 AmeriCorps members, 492,000 Senior Corps volunteers, 1.1 million Learn and Serve America students, and 2.2 million additional community volunteers mobilized and managed through the agency's programs.

**2010**

CNCS launches the Social Innovation Fund. SIF ensures that high-impact nonprofits are able to attract the resources they need to grow and improve the economic, education and health prospects of low-income communities.

**2012**

CNCS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) launch FEMA Corps. FEMA Corps is an innovative new partnership designed to strengthen the nation's ability to respond to and recover from disasters while expanding career opportunities for young people.

**2014**

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AmeriCorps celebrated nationwide with simultaneous swearing in of all members on September 12, 2014.

**Today**

Today as in the past, providers of National Service continue to believe that every American has skills and talents to give and share. Through this service those involved are exposed to a culture of citizenship, service and responsibility and the communities served are provided a catalyst for solutions to their problems.

As a result, more than five million individuals are engaged in service each year that involves over 70,000 community-based and faith-based organizations solving problems and strengthening communities while building the capacity of the nonprofit sector.

**Corporation for National and Community Service Programs**

In 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service was established. The Corporation was created to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. It merged the work and staffs of two predecessor agencies, ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service. CNCS empowers and supports Americans to tackle persistent challenges such as helping youth succeed in school, securing safe affordable housing for economically disadvantaged families, or

helping communities respond to disasters. Through this work, CNCS achieves its mission of improving lives, strengthening communities and fortifying the civic health of our nation. CNCS' 2011 -2015 Strategic Plan leverages the strength of grantees, participants, programs, state service commissions and the American public to build a network of programs that offer effective solutions in the six priority areas:

1. Disaster Services
2. Economic Opportunity
3. Education
4. Environmental Stewardship
5. Healthy Futures
6. Veterans and Military Families

They will produce these results by investing in effective local initiatives, engaging more Americans in service, supporting evidence-based programs, and leveraging public-private partnerships.

For more information go to: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas>

## The Programs



### **AmeriCorps\* State and National**

The program's goals are getting things done, strengthening community, and encouraging responsibility. Members receive educational awards in return for service. The AmeriCorps network consists of a wide variety of diverse programs in every state of the nation. For a complete listing of AmeriCorps programs in Illinois, go to [http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/illinois\\_programs.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/illinois_programs.aspx).

### **AmeriCorps\* VISTA**

With a thirty-five year tradition of working with community groups to help low-income people help themselves, VISTA focuses on capacity building – helping local organizations develop plans, raise funds, coordinate programs, and recruit and train local volunteers to effectively serve those in need. For more information about AmeriCorps\* VISTA in Illinois, contact the Illinois Corporation for National and Community Service State Program Office at (312) 353-1960, or [IL@cns.gov](mailto:IL@cns.gov).

### **AmeriCorps\* NCCC**

The National Civilian Community Corps involves young people ages 18-24 in performing community service projects. This program is a residential service program in which members are housed and trained together on military bases, and deployed as teams to service sites across the nation. NCCC members conduct service projects with a special emphasis on protecting the environment, promoting public safety, and responding to natural disasters. The campus for Illinois is located in Vinton, IA. For more information about AmeriCorps\* NCCC, Iowa campus, contact (319) 472-9664.



### **National Senior Service Corps**

Or simply “Senior Corps,” engages older Americans – with their great skills, talents, and experience – in addressing urgent issues facing the nation, in one of three programs: *Foster Grandparents*, who serve one-on-one with young people who have special needs; *Senior Companions*, who help other seniors live independently in their homes; and *Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)* volunteers, who work with local groups to meet a wide range of community needs. For more information about Senior Corps in the state of Illinois, contact the Illinois Corporation for National and Community Service State Program Office at (312) 353-1960.



### **Citizen Corps**

The mission of Citizen Corps is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds. For more information about Citizen Corps, go to <http://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps>.

## **National Days of Service**

There are eight different National Days of Service celebrated each year. They are part of a National Service celebration and awareness across the nation and provide opportunity to bring visibility and recognition to programs. They also provide opportunity to engage members and volunteers in unique and creative service projects in the community. Lastly, they also provide a great opportunity to promote programs and volunteerism and recruit volunteers and members. Guidance for participation in the individual days is provided by the National Corporation for Community Service and/or the Serve Illinois Commission or the sponsor of the celebration.

### **Required Participation in National Days of Service in Illinois**

The Serve Illinois Commission requires programs to participate in three National Days of Service each year. The Commission provides guidance and coordination for these Days of Service. The following are the three mandatory days:



### **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

“A day ON...not a day off”, occurs on the day of observance of the federal holiday honoring Dr. King’s birth each year. The Corporation for National and Community Service is responsible for promoting this day as a day of service to honor the life and teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. Go to <http://mlkday.gov/> for more information.



### **National AmeriCorps Week**

This week provides the perfect opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners, and friends to shine a spotlight on the work done by members—and to motivate more Americans to serve their communities. Many events are scheduled across the country. Individuals and organizations with a special interest in AmeriCorps—especially, members, programs, and alums—are encouraged to use their creativity to mark the week in any way they see fit. The choice is up to you! Actual dates each year are determined by the National Corporation for Community Service. For more information, visit [www.americorps.gov/about/ameriCorpsweek/index.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/about/ameriCorpsweek/index.asp).

## **September 11**

### **National Day of Service and Remembrance**

### **National Day of Service and Remembrance**

By pledging to volunteer, perform good deeds, or engage in other forms of charitable service during the week of 9/11, you and your organization will help rekindle the remarkable spirit of unity, service and compassion shared by so many in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. And you’ll help create a fitting, enduring and historic legacy in the name of those lost and injured on 9/11, and in tribute to the 9/11 first responders, rescue and recovery workers, and volunteers, and our brave military personnel who continue to serve to this day. Visit <http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/september-11th-national-day-service-and-remembrance>.



## Other Days of National Service

Programs are also encouraged to participate in the following National Days of Service:



### Global Youth Service Day

Over the past decade, Global Youth Service Day has brought together more than 13 million people in thousands of communities nationwide. Go to <http://www.gysd.org/> for more information.



### National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing a week in April as an annual celebration of volunteering. Every President since has signed a proclamation promoting National Volunteer Week. National Volunteer Week has become the official time to recognize and celebrate the efforts of volunteers at the local, state, and national levels. For more information, and to get exact dates in April, visit <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/signatureevents/nvw>.



### Join Hands Day

Held in May each year, the goal of Join Hands Day is to begin making connections and friendships across generations that will continue long after the day is over. Developing these relationships is essential to creating healthy organizations, neighborhoods, and communities. For more information, visit <https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/join-hands-day/>.



### Make a Difference Day

This national day of doing good, sponsored by USA Weekend and Points of Light Foundation, is

held each year on the fourth Saturday in October. Go to <http://makeadifferenceday.com> for more information.



### **National Family Volunteer Day**

The Points of Light Foundation launched the Family Matters initiative to encourage and engage families in community-oriented projects. National Family Volunteer Day is held the Saturday before Thanksgiving every year and kicks off National Family Volunteer Week as part of an annual public awareness. For more information, visit <https://netforum.avectra.com/eWeb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=AFALLIANCE&WebCode=JoinH> andDay.

## **Organization**

### **Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)**

As the primary federal source of funding for national volunteer activities, CNCS is one of the most important “players on the field”. Headquartered in Washington DC, CNCS operates in a decentralized manner that gives a significant amount of administrative responsibility to states and national and local nonprofit groups.

It is an independent Federal Agency with a Board of Directors appointed by the President for five-year terms. Its Chief Executive Officer is also appointed by the President and then confirmed by the Senate. It has nearly 600 employees stationed in Washington DC and throughout the states and US territories.

#### **CNCS Support Functions:**

- Provides Federal Source for Funding
- Oversees programmatic aspects of grants and awards
- Oversees financial aspects of grants and awards
- Coordinates national service days and other national initiatives
- Answers legal questions related to program management
- Combats fraud and abuse through its Office of the Inspector General
- Implements media campaigns and develops publications
- Manages the education awards for members
- Directs national technical assistance providers and State Commission Staff on training and technical assistance issues

There are two main divisions in the AmeriCorps headquarters staff: AmeriCorps\*State and AmeriCorps\*National. Each State Service Commission has a specific CNCS AmeriCorps\*State program officer assigned as their primary liaison at headquarters; each National Program grantee has a specific CNCS AmeriCorps\*National program officer assigned as their primary liaison. CNCS program officers are the frontline support for program staff, assisting with any issues that

arise including locating needed information and clarifications of policy. Program officers are also the primary monitors at headquarters of how things are going in the states for which they are responsible. Program officers work closely with other units at CNCS to provide quality support to the field.

### **CNCS State Office**

CNCS also operates offices in each state, Illinois' being in Chicago. These offices are responsible for administering AmeriCorps\*VISTA projects as well as the three Senior Corps programs. CNCS employees in these locations assist with the monitoring of National AmeriCorps programs sites, solicit and review Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service grants in their states, and participate in cross-program planning initiatives, including development of State Service Plans. CNCS State Office staff, usually the state office director, serves as an ex-officio member of the State Service Commission. For a list of CNCS State officers and contact information, please go to: [www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices).

## **Serve Illinois Commission**

### **Serve Illinois Commission Facts:**

- Legislatively established in 2000 through the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service Act
- Amended in 2014 to move the program from Department of Human Services to the Department of Public Health and changes make up of Commission members.
- Commission has both staff and a Commission (Board)
- Staff are led by an Executive Director who is appointed by the Governor
- Commission staff is housed in the Department of Public Health; Office of Preparedness and Response.
- Commission members are appointed by the Governor and serve to consult and advise on issues
- Commission members consists of up to 25 voting members and up to 15 nonvoting ex-officio members

### **Mission**

Serve Illinois improves communities by enhancing volunteerism and instilling an ethic of service throughout the State.

### **Vision**

Illinois will become a leader in volunteerism in the nation assisted by the work of the Serve Illinois Commission.

### **Means to Achieving the Vision**

The Commission will expand volunteerism throughout the entire state, connecting rural, suburban, and urban communities, and integrating people of all backgrounds, cultures, ages, and abilities. The Commission will also embrace and promote the idea that everyone can recognize their ability and responsibility to strengthen our communities through voluntary service.

**Serve Illinois Commission: “Most Important Player in the State’s Volunteerism Efforts”**

- Administers nearly 30 federally funded AmeriCorps State programs; this includes selection, oversight, and evaluation of these grant recipients
- Prepares and updates three year national service plan for state
- Prepares a three year strategic plan
- Partners with Corporation State Office on common issues
- Leads development of informational materials to increase awareness of volunteers and their organizations
- Promotes service and volunteerism through awards and other recognition opportunities
- Coordinates National Days of Service at the state level
- Promotes awareness of and attendance at training and professional development offerings for volunteers, members, and program staff
- Provides support to the statewide network of volunteer organizations

**Serve Illinois Programs****Illinois AmeriCorps State Program**

- Nearly 30 federally funded programs, 300 host sites, in 50 counties with over 1000 members
- Programs focus is determined by the needs of the communities
- Focus areas funded include education, public health and safety, environmental stewardship, and human service and support needs
- Programs are the core and main focus of the Serve Illinois Commission

**Illinois Volunteer Management Network (IVMN)**

- Network uses a regional model and breaks state into five regions
- Through a series of regional meetings and trainings addresses the primary concerns of volunteer managers and administrators in that region
- Serves as a grassroots resource for voluntary agencies and associations
- Primary areas of focus include volunteer recruitment and retention and network and program capacity building
- The Commission through the Department of Human Services seeks input from the regions on ongoing and emerging operational issues

**Volunteer Centers of Illinois**

- Twelve Volunteer Centers throughout the state
- Connects any person or group with a variety of opportunities to serve
- Promotes volunteerism in their service area
- Active role in strategic mobilization of volunteers in times of need

**Commission's Governor's Volunteer Service Award**

- Statewide Award Program presented annually
- Nomination process
- Recognizes individuals and businesses
- Thirty + categories and awards

**Serve Illinois Quarterly Newsletter**

- Provides information on recent events
- Resource for upcoming events
- Opportunity for programs to promote themselves and their members/volunteers

**Commission Staff Responsibilities and Support to AmeriCorps State Programs**

- Monthly phone meetings with Program Directors (mandatory for all programs)
- Face to face Program Directors Training and meeting twice a year (mandatory for all programs)
- Bidders Conferences held throughout the state to go over grant application and process (mandatory for anyone applying)
- Review and subsequent selection of applications
- Ongoing one on one technical support and assistance to programs on programmatic and fiscal issues
- Directives and updates as necessary on emerging program issues and changes
- Internal reviews to prepare programs for audits
- Monitoring of program files and financial reports and records
- Evaluation of programs
- Coordinates National Service Recognition Day (mandatory for all programs)
- Assistance with Disability and Inclusion issues

For more information and news about the Serve Illinois Commission, and to get a current and complete listing of Commissioners and Staff, go to [www.Serve.Illinois.gov](http://www.Serve.Illinois.gov)

**Training and Technical Assistance**

It is important for volunteer and service programs to succeed and thrive. Critical to the development of the programs is training and access to information that is both timely and comprehensive. The following provides a listing of different levels of training and training resources available for programs.

**Commission Trainings***AmeriCorps Program Director Training*

- Held late summer to early fall each year to coincide with the program start up
- Mandatory for all programs to attend

### *National Service Recognition Day*

- Held in October every year in Springfield
- Oath of Service taken by members
- Educational component offered for members and program staff
- Mandatory for all programs to bring as many members as possible

### *Monthly Meetings*

- Conference calls with programs
- Sharing of information and opportunity to ask questions
- Mandatory for all programs to participate

### *Webinars*

- Topics related to Program and Fiscal Management
- Mandatory for all programs to participate

## **State and Regional Volunteer Conferences**

The following opportunities provide volunteer organizations training on capacity building that enhance the skills of volunteer managers, staff and volunteers. These trainings provide valuable networking opportunities as well as quality professional development opportunities. The following is a listing of those conferences and a link to more information on each.

### *Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference*

<http://www.civconference.org/>

### *Southern Illinois Volunteerism Conference*

<http://www.sivc.net/>

### *Northwestern Illinois/MVDOVIA Volunteerism Conference*

<http://mvdovia.org/>

### *Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration*

<http://www.icova.info/>

## **National Conference**

The National Conference on Volunteering and Service is convened by the Points of Light Foundation and is held in the summer each year. The Conference provides sessions on volunteer management, community collaboration, fundraising, financial management, AmeriCorps/CNCS programs, member development, and program development as well as critical topics related to volunteering and service.

### *National Conference on Volunteering*

<http://www.volunteeringandservice.org/>

## **Online Resources**

There are a number of good resources available to programs online. However we often waste valuable time searching through websites and search engines for those essential, basic and critical tools and resources that manage to get buried amongst the other information. Below are ten sites that we feel you will use more commonly and frequently.

## **Glossary of terms**

This glossary, developed by the Serve Illinois Commission, contains over 120 commonly used terms and acronyms of the programs of the Serve Illinois Commission and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

<http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/AmeriCorpsGlossaryofTerms.aspx>

## **AmeriCorps: Building a High Quality AmeriCorps Program- From Blue Print to Implementation-New Program Start-Up Guide**

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ameriCorps/building-high-quality-ameriCorps-program-blueprint-implementation-new-program> This in depth guide developed by CNCS provides information to prospective program applicants provides key information for new and existing programs and provides a starting point for new staff of AmeriCorps programs to begin to understand the complex facets of the programs. The guide covers required AmeriCorps documents and the time phases of program design and operation. Topics include: Program Development and Management, Community and Site Partnerships, Member Development and Support, and Financial and Grant Management. It also includes editable forms and tools in Rich Text Format (RTF).

## **Guide to Creating Inclusive Volunteer Programs**

<http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/Inclusive-Programs-Guide.aspx>

This guide developed by the Serve Illinois Inclusion Team discusses the importance, and the basics, of a service environment that promotes actions and attitudes that keep ability and acceptance in the forefront. It provides you with tools to use when speaking to, recruiting, interviewing, employing and working with people of all abilities. In addition, it is an aid in training staff about inclusion and accommodations.

## **National Service Criminal History Check Resources**

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check> This link of resources from CNCS provides the Federal Regulations related to background checks, a comprehensive and detailed FAQ and training materials.

## **Performance Measurement and Measures**

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement> This link to resources compiled by CNCS provides understanding of the Corporation's performance measurement requirements, terms used, logic models, indicators, data collection, methods, reporting results and the elements of a performance measurement plan. The site contains tutoring programs, online courses, effective practices and an on line library as resources.

## **eGrants and MyAmeriCorps**

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ameriCorps/myameriCorps-portal-training-egrants> This link provided by CNCS provides tutorials, PowerPoint slide shows, FAQs and other resources that guides you through the functions of eGrants and MyAmeriCorps. The comprehensive array of topics include: creating and managing eGrants accounts, member recruitment, enrollment and management, program management and user roles and management.

## **Serve Illinois Website**

### **[www.Serve.Illinois.gov](http://www.Serve.Illinois.gov)**

This is the site for everything “volunteer” in Illinois. It contains comprehensive information about the Serve Illinois Commission, AmeriCorps and National Service programs in Illinois, volunteer opportunities across the state and the latest information and news on volunteering and service in Illinois.

## **AmeriCorps Program Start-Up Online Resource**

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ameriCorps/new-ameriCorps-program-start-institute> The Online Resource Guide is a user friendly learning pathway to information, resources and tools to launch or sustain an AmeriCorps program. The site is designed to align the resources with each phase of your program. The site is composed of six sections: Program Development and Management, Member Development and Management, Inclusion, Community and Site Partnerships, Sustainability, and Financial and Grants Management.

## **Collaboration**

### **Collaboration: A National Service Program Priority**

- Goal is simple: We can accomplish more by working together
- Working in consort with each other can help stretch limited resources
- Partnerships developed for one time projects can blossom into long term partnerships
- Partnerships among agencies help build strong network of volunteers for the community
- Communicating, Cooperating, and Coordinating are key cornerstones to successful collaboration

### **Ways we can begin to collaborate**

- Collaboration just doesn't happen; it is an intentional relationship (It Takes Action!)
- Network with others like you in your community and on a statewide basis
- Communicate: Make sure others know your goals, tell them about your projects
- Cooperate: Invite them in on your projects, invite yourself in on their projects
- Coordinate: Link your goals that are common or shared with other programs



# Program Start up

**Recruitment**  
**Position Descriptions**  
**Screening and Interviewing**  
**ADA Accommodations and Illinois Disability Inclusion Program**  
**Background Checks**  
**Nondiscrimination Laws**  
**Orientation**  
**Affiliation with AmeriCorps National Network**  
**Member Service Agreement**  
**Member Status**  
**Member Slots**  
**Tutoring Requirements**  
**Living Allowance**  
**Segal AmeriCorps Education Award**  
**Child Care Benefit Program**  
**Health Care Coverage**  
**Loan Forbearance/Interest Accrual**  
**Prohibited Activities**  
**Allowable Activities**

## Recruitment

Successful recruitment strategy is the foundation for a thriving AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps programs live and die by how well they network. The individuals you select and place within the community represent your program every day; their interactions either enhance or detract from your organization's reputation.

### Community Recruitment

As an AmeriCorps program, you must actively seek to recruit program members from the community in which the project is conducted. Members of diverse races and ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, both men and women, and individuals with disabilities, unless and to the extent that the approved program design requires emphasizing the recruitment of staff and members who share a specific characteristic or background. However, in no case may you violate the nondiscrimination and non-displacement rules governing participant selection.

### National Recruitment

The AmeriCorps Recruitment and Placement System has been retired and replaced by the new **My AmeriCorps** system. All programs will be required to have their program on this system by the beginning of their program year. If you have problems or questions about this system, please visit

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/recruitment>

#### Resource Manual

“Recruiting AmeriCorps Members” is a 29 page comprehensive guide to creating a strategy for recruiting members. The manual provides numerous proven strategies, with hands-on real life advice on how to run a successful recruitment campaign. The manual is available at [www.cnsc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/recruitment\\_manual.pdf](http://www.cnsc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/recruitment_manual.pdf).

## Position Descriptions

Service assignments must be meaningful to the AmeriCorps member (a function of the placement and recruit matching system) and the community in which the service is performed. The goals of each position must be achievable. Members must be connected with people in the local community so ownership of the experience will be shared, ultimately assumed by the local community, and consequently, long lasting. Everyone must have true involvement (input and control) in the work. Projects must be possible within the time available (project duration, resources, terms of service, etc.).

Position descriptions should include all professional elements necessary to define the service assignment and the qualifications necessary to achieve it. Typically, position descriptions are too short, non-existent, unfamiliar to the AmeriCorps member, or filed away and never used once a project is begun. These documents should be revisited regularly to encourage member feedback,

measure success and find areas which need enhancement. They should be modified to reflect

changing needs as they develop and are useful in evaluating members' performance.

## Screening and Interviewing

After receiving applications, screening and placement of members is the next most critical step an AmeriCorps supervisor or director faces. After screening out clearly unqualified applicants, it's important to involve host agencies who will work directly with new members. This allows for a "second look" at the applications by an involved party, creates buy-in with the host agency staff, and adds another level of assessment for specific talents or skills that a director or supervisor may not be looking for during the initial screening.

Once the potential candidates are agreed on, the next step is to decide how to conduct the interviews. We generate a list of potential questions to ask each candidate, agree on which ones to use, and then commit them to writing so that each applicant is asked the same questions. This ensures all prospective members are treated equally and fairly, allowing for an "apples to apples" comparison when evaluating multiple candidates after the interviews. It is definitely worth considering including host agency staff in the interview process; this creates buy-in from the host agency and adds another level of insight for those candidates with similar qualifications. During the interviews good note-taking is crucial, especially if you interview many candidates. Don't rely on your memory to supply the details.

## ADA Accommodations and Illinois Disability Inclusion Program

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.), programs must provide reasonable accommodations to the known mental or physical disabilities of members, and all selections and project assignments must be made without regard to the need to provide reasonable accommodations. As a Program Director, you may be called upon to make decisions regarding reasonable accommodation. However, the law does not require that you provide reasonable accommodations for any participant who would pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others even if accommodated.

The Serve Illinois Commission is committed to promoting inclusion of people of all abilities in National Service Programs. The Disability Inclusion Program is a special project of the Serve Illinois Commission. Through its Inclusion Officer, the project provides training and technical assistance to promote the recruitment and placement of potential members with disabilities in National Service programs in Illinois.

When a qualified person with a disability requires an accommodation to complete a successful term of service, it is the role of the Inclusion Officer to assist the individual programs in assessment, identification and procurement of accommodations as needed; maintaining the member's participation throughout the process. Formal approval to purchase accommodations is required prior to purchasing. No cost accommodations can be made upon agreement between the member and the program supervisors. The Inclusion Officer is available for consultation in all areas regarding accommodations and Inclusive practices. The Inclusion Officer also provides opportunities for education and training and is available for assistance in developing and participating in outreach efforts to build awareness and provide resources necessary to better embrace and support inclusive efforts.

The Illinois Inclusion Team has developed a “Guide to Creating Inclusive Volunteer Programs.” This valuable tool is a work in progress, to be updated at least annually as new technologies, supports and best practice become available. The Guide seeks to provide suggestions and information to assist programs in establishing a culture of inclusion. To access the guide or to gain more information including the Accommodation Request Procedure, the Accommodation Request Form and other related forms or for contact information for the Inclusion Officer, go to [http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/disability\\_outreach.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/disability_outreach.aspx)

### **Funds Available for Accommodating Members with Disabilities**

This funding is available to AmeriCorps programs currently enrolling members with disabilities who need or would benefit from an accommodation. Grantees are eligible to submit requests for costs of products and services connected to disability accommodations or for the reimbursement of the costs of reasonable accommodations that were provided within the last 90 days – and for which you have the required documentation.

Grantees must provide CNCS with the following information:

- 1) Type of disability;
- 2) A bill for the accommodating services or, following implementation of the accommodation(s), documentation of the purchase (as long as the purchase documented occurred within the last 90 days);
- 3) An explanation of how the reasonable accommodation will assist or has assisted the AmeriCorps member. The process of selecting the accommodation should be an interactive collaboration between the AmeriCorps member, his or her supervisor, and program managers. Free technical assistance regarding disability accommodation is available through the Job Accommodation Network: [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)  
If fewer than three different accommodations providers are/were available for assessing the price of the accommodation, grantee must explain what they did to assess and select the accommodation vendor.

Grantees must retain and be prepared to provide documentation for each member for whom reasonable accommodation funds are requested. The documentation must show that:

- At least three different accommodation/services were priced and the basis for selecting the accommodation if the lowest priced accommodation was not selected. If fewer than three different accommodation providers are/were available, grantee must explain this and notify CNCS in the application for accommodation funds.
- Verification by the member that the accommodation was provided.

You will receive a response to your request for disability accommodation funds within a few weeks of submitting it to [accommodations@cns.gov](mailto:accommodations@cns.gov). CC your Serve Illinois Program Officer when submitting this request.

**NOTE:** Do not include personally Identifying Information in your request.

NOTE: Submission of this application for reasonable accommodation funds serves as a certification by the Grantee that the AmeriCorps member for whom the accommodation funds are sought has a disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). (“A person has a disability if they have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.”)

You are not required to obtain documentation that the service member has a disability if the disability is apparent.

You should obtain documentation from a medical or rehabilitation expert to better understand the need for the reasonable accommodation for service member requests where a disability is non-apparent or the accommodation request is not straightforward. These professionals can also verify that someone meets disability status. There is much broader coverage under the ADA after the Amendments in 2008.

## **Background Checks**

### **The Rule**

All programs must conduct background checks on participants as well as on all employees and others with recurring access to a vulnerable population who receive a salary, an education award, living allowance or stipend through a program receiving assistance under national service laws, regardless of their level of contact with a vulnerable population.

### **What is “recurring access” and a “vulnerable population?”**

Recurring access is defined as the ability on more than one occasion to approach, observe or communicate with an individual through physical proximity or other means. This “other means” can be communication by phone, text or email.

Vulnerable population can be anyone 17 years of age or younger or it can person aged 60 years or older with physical or mental disabilities which substantially limits one or more major life activities.

### **Why do we have to have background checks?**

First of all background checks are not a check for employment. It is a check to clear someone to perform service or be a part of a program that delivers service, is put in a position of trust and is in contact with vulnerable populations. This policy was put in place by the Corporation in 2009 to protect both the programs and their staff and vulnerable populations being served. The background checks insures that individuals participating in our programs have no criminal or other history that would keep them from participation. Although this is no guarantee against

criminal acts, it does reduce the likelihood and could reduce liability for the programs in the event a crime occurs.

**Who has to have background checks?**

Individuals who are required to have background checks are referred to as being in “covered positions.” A “covered position” refers to any individual serving or employed through a National Service grant. Specifically, this means anyone, program staff or members who receive salaries, stipends, living allowances or education awards connected to/through National Service funding. Another way to look at it is anyone with direct costs or costs associated with program match are in covered positions. When there is doubt, use the “on the budget” or “expenditure report” tests. Individual listed in the approved grant budget receiving either a stipend or salary or in other words “are on the budget” are in covered positions. The “expenditure report” test involves the Federal Financial Report (FFR.) If the cost of the payment to an individual is included in the federal or matching share of the report then it is also a covered position.

**Who does not have to have background checks?**

Program staff whose compensation is only claimed within indirect grant costs and Community volunteers with no affiliation to the program and no financial remuneration.

**What types of background checks are required?**

There are four types of background checks. All AmeriCorps State programs are required to complete these checks on members and staff in covered positions. They are:

- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse and Neglect Background Check
- National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR)
- State Police Criminal History Record
- FBI Fingerprint Background Check

Either a name or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the candidate’s State of residence on his/her application **and** in the State where the individual will serve or work must be done.

**Use of the Criminal History Authorization Form**

All programs are required to use the Criminal History Authorization Form. This form provides a quick reference for tracking the dates the various types of background checks were submitted and received. It is required to be part of the member file. The form should be signed and dated by the applicant or potential member.

\*See Attachment #14 Criminal History Authorization Form

**When do they have to be done?**

Under no circumstances may an individual be hired or enrolled or begin service or employment without first having cleared the NSOPR component of the check. The FBI and Illinois State Police Criminal History check and the DCFS Child Abuse and Neglect Background Check must be initiated no later than the start of service or work.

You need only perform the checks on viable applicants. If you receive a large number of applicants for either employment or AmeriCorps positions, you need only perform checks on those who are likely to be offered a position. Use your application screening process and your interview process to bring the number of candidates down before starting the checks and/or incurring any costs. The National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) produces immediate results and therefore no one can log hours or receive a stipend before this check has been completed. Because of the time it takes to receive the results of the FBI, State Police and DCFS reports, individuals may start before the results but they cannot have access to vulnerable populations unless they are accompanied at all times by someone who has cleared a criminal history check.

If these remedial steps are not followed, service hours and costs will be disallowed.

**Program's responsibility with staff and potential members**

As the program begins the process of completing the checks, it is imperative that they verify the identity of the individual to be checked, fingerprint the individual for fingerprint based searches and complete authorization forms to authorize the search and to later release the information.

It is very important to explain to the individual what the process is for, how it works and what findings would result in their not being selected to be a part of the program.

*Verify Identity and Citizenship*

To verify their identity, the applicant is required to produce a government –issued photo identification card. This includes Government- issued photo cards, State Driver's License; non-driver photo IDs issued by the State, Federally issued photo IDs, Passports and Photo ID's if issued by a State operated school. To verify United States Citizenship or United States National the applicant can use passports or government issued birth certificates.

If a prospective member is not a US Citizen, they must then be a Lawful Permanent Resident Alien of the US (LPR) to be eligible. There are a number of ways they can prove they are eligible: (1) a Permanent Resident Card, INS Form I-551; (2) an Alien Registration Receipt Card, INS Form I-551, (3) a passport indicating that the INS has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence; or (4) an I-94 indicating that the INS has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence. NOTE: A student visa does not confer eligibility to enroll in an AmeriCorps program. Just having a "Form I94 Departure Record" is not sufficient unless it is annotated to indicate the member was a LPR.

For more information, please consult the AmeriCorps Regulations 252st 2.200 Subpart B.

Once enrolled, the My AmeriCorps Portal will note that the Member's citizenship has been verified. Print out that confirmation and place it in the Member's file.

### *Understanding of the process and findings*

It is very important that the applicants understand the process of the four background checks, what each is looking for, how each search is conducted, and how their starting in the program is impacted by the completion and the findings of these checks.

### *Authorization*

Individuals will grant authorization for each of the checks by completing and signing release/permission forms. Some of these forms come from the entities you are requesting checks from. In the absence of forms, forms need to be developed by the programs. Copies of these completed forms should be placed in the members file for documentation of the date check was initiated. These forms must remain in the file.

### **What is the process for each of the four types of background checks?**

#### **National Sex Offender Public Registry**

There is no formal authorization form. Programs must develop their own authorization forms to be used. There is no cost for this check and results are immediate. Go to [www.nsopw.gov](http://www.nsopw.gov) Print the results off for your records and place in file. Make sure the footer of the printed record has the date the results were generated on it. Remember because of the immediate results no one can start before this check has been completed.

#### **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Background Check for Child Abuse and Neglect:**

This is a background check required by the Serve Illinois Commission and not the Corporation. You will need the form "Authorization for Background Check-Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) Form # CFS689 Rev1/2012. It is available at [http://www.state.il.us/dcf/docs/CFS\\_689\\_Authorization\\_for\\_Background\\_Check\\_for\\_Programs\\_NOT\\_Licensed\\_by\\_DCFS\\_\(Fillable\).pdf](http://www.state.il.us/dcf/docs/CFS_689_Authorization_for_Background_Check_for_Programs_NOT_Licensed_by_DCFS_(Fillable).pdf)

Have Individual complete, sign and date the "Authorization for Background Check-Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) Form # CFS689 Rev1/2012. Program will complete the Agency Information part at the bottom of the form. Program will send completed form to the DCFS. This can be done by mail, fax, or email. Please follow the directions on the form when sending. Be sure to make a copy of the completed form for your file and make a notation on it of the day the form was sent.

The results will be sent to you in about two weeks. Put the results in the file. There is no cost for this check.



## **Illinois State Police Criminal History Record**

There are two ways to get the information (Fingerprint and Non-Fingerprint.) The Non-Fingerprint uses Alpha –Numeric Subject Identifiers (Name, Sex, Race and Date of Birth.) The Fingerprint method is more accurate since individuals may have other names but only one set of fingerprints. All requests for information from the Illinois State Police must be submitted on a Conviction Information Request Forms. The Non-Fingerprint Request Form is ISP6-405B and the Fingerprint Request Form is ISP6-404B. Forms may be ordered by calling the Bureau of Identification at (815) 740-5160 or by going to [www.isp.state.il.us/crimhistory/uciaformreq.cfm](http://www.isp.state.il.us/crimhistory/uciaformreq.cfm).

Non Fingerprint Reports are \$16 and Fingerprint Reports are \$20.

## **Home State Background Check**

If an applicant is or has been a resident of another state it may be necessary to have a criminal background check run on them from that state. This is determined by checking the Member's permanent address on their Application Form. This will also allow you to start the check prior to the members start date. You must initiate a background check with that home state unless they are full time college students residing at an Illinois campus.

## **FBI Fingerprint Background Check**

It is also referred to as the Criminal History Record or "Rap Sheet." It utilizes Fingerprint match to gain information from all states and US territories. This information includes name of agency with matching fingerprints, date of arrest, arrest charge and disposition of the arrest or in the case of no matches a report of "No Record."

Individuals being checked must submit request for information using Form OMB 1110-0052 1-783 (Rev.5-5-2011) Applicant Information Form. Completed and signed application must be accompanied a completed fingerprint card. These completed fingerprint card includes, Name, Date of Birth, Descriptive Data (Gender, Race), all 10 rolled fingerprint impressions, plain impressions including thumb of both hands and the card must not be older than 18 months.

In Illinois, electronic responses from the FBI come through the Illinois State Police. Once received, ISP forwards notification to the program. Reports are encrypted.

There is a cost of \$18 per copy for the report.

## **Use of Third Party Vendors**

Third Party Vendors are private businesses that have contracted with the FBI and/ or obtained certification with State Criminal Data Base Agencies across the country. These businesses are channeling agencies that can conduct fingerprinting, prepare the necessary paperwork for submission and receive results electronically. They can also conduct Non-Finger print inquiries. There is a fee for their service in addition to the costs associated with the type of check being conducted. Fees vary by business and by services performed.

For the names of vendors in your area contact the Illinois State Police, Bureau of Identification at (815) 740-5160.

### **Electronic Responses**

Electronic Responses are a quicker way for you to get results. Electronic Responses avoid problems with the mail or items getting lost, forgotten or misplaced when sent directly to the individual.

Electronic Responses from the FBI and States are federally mandated to be encrypted and require software to decrypt the reports. This software and instructions for downloading and using are available either through the Illinois State Police or the third party vendor.

### **Who pays for the checks?**

The costs associated for conducting checks are the burden of the program. However, these costs are an allowable operating cost and should be included in the budget. These costs would include, fingerprinting fees, State and FBI fees, third party fees, mailing costs and notary costs.

### **Participant's opportunity to review findings**

It is important that the program provide an opportunity to review the findings with the individual regardless of the findings including no findings. Individuals should be given copies of all findings. If there is a finding that would/could prohibit them from serving this should be addressed and the next steps in the process discussed. All programs must have a decision tree regarding their background check policy that should be utilized in the event of a finding. If there is some finding the individual wishes to contest, it is their responsibility to pursue this.

### **Documenting Your Checks**

You are required to retain the results . Your records must be stored and secured in the member's file or the applicant's file. Secured means in a locked area. Electronic records must be printed off and placed in the files. Copies of requests for checks should also be kept in the member file with date requested. Access to the member files should be permitted only to individuals who have official need to review the information. Member files and their contents are to be retained for seven years.

### **Reading the Results**

In the majority of instances, checks results will come back as no matches, no records or no priors. These and similar type of responses require no additional action. In instances where the check of the individual did not clear or there are "hits" with some type of record or offense noted but not fully disclosed, you will need to take more action. Programs must determine if the offense is one that disqualifies the individual under CNCS regulations or is it another offense your program considers to be disqualifying.

## **Results that prohibit individuals from serving and how to handle**

**Anyone listed or required to be listed on a sex offender registry is ineligible to serve. Also anyone convicted of murder is ineligible.** Additionally, any offense that the program deems to be in violation of their criminal history check policies will mean ineligibility for the individual. Policies must be fair to the individual while at the same time protecting the populations served and guarding the program and host sites from liability.

### **Applicant refusal or falsifying information**

Anyone who refuses to grant permission or undergo any of the checks disqualifies themselves from service. Anyone who gives or makes a false statement in connection with the Criminal Background History check will also be disqualified from service. Programs should clearly explain to individuals the consequences of not consenting to the checks and of providing false or misleading information.

### **What happens if we have to de-select a member based on criminal history?**

The slot refill policy currently in place applies.

### **Risks for noncompliance**

Programs can simply be in compliance by assuring that things happen in a timely fashion and that proper records are maintained. Failure to do this will result in the program being out of compliance. Being out of compliance has financial consequences. Service hours, wages, match and living allowances costs may be disallowed. Additionally, corrective action has to be implemented to correct the problem. Corrective action is time consuming and keeps you away from performing the day to day tasks associated with your program. Taking corrective action after the fact will not recoup disallowed costs. Background checks are not an area to take short cuts or any risks.

### **Good Risk Management Practices**

Perform NSOPR checks when applications are reviewed.

Initiate State Criminal and FBI Checks before the start of service and have documentation to back this up.

Initiate the DCFS Child Abuse and Neglect check before the start of service and have documentation to back this up.

Keep records of all checks and requests for checks in the members file and those for staff in a separate file. Make sure the files are kept confidential and secure.

If an individual is ok after the NSOPR check, they must be accompanied by an individual who has cleared all the checks for any service hours performed for vulnerable populations while

waiting on the results of either the FBI or state check. The accompanying supervisor's timesheets must be signed and placed in the Member's file.

### **Key points to remember when performing National Service Criminal History Checks**

Verify the identity of the individual against a government issued photo.

Obtain written authorization from the individual to perform the checks.

Document understanding that selection is subject to the checks.

Determine the types of checks required and from where they are to be obtained and associated fees.

Complete the NSOPR check before service/work begins.

Initiate DCFS Child Abuse and Neglect and State and FBI Criminal Checks no later than the start of service/work.

Once results are available provide opportunity for review of the findings.

Keep the information secure and confidential.

Accompany those with pending checks when in contact with vulnerable populations.

Document that the checks were part of the selection process by having requests for checks and results in the member file.

Questions? Contact Your Program Officer.

### **Nondiscrimination Laws**

All programs must comply with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and Regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, and equal employment opportunity including, but not limited to, the following law and regulations and all the subsequent amendments thereto:

1. The Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5)
2. Public Works Employment Discrimination Act (775 ILCS 10)
3. The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000a-2000h-6) (as amended)
4. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794)
5. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C 12101 et seq.)

## 6. Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 (Equal Employment Opportunity)

For further reference, please visit [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov) for State Laws or <http://uscode.house.gov/search/criteria.shtml> for Federal (USC) Laws.

## Orientation

A good Member Orientation lays the foundation for providing information that will be used by the member throughout the year. At this point and time in the Service Year, members are trying to determine their place in the program and are developing their understanding of what this year is about. They need to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as have an understanding of national service and AmeriCorps. Orientation begins this on boarding process for members. It provides valuable information on important requirements, pieces of information they will use throughout the service year, and other useful tools knowledge, and skills they will need to conduct themselves properly and have a successful year. An organized and creative orientation program will go a long way towards setting the stage to helping all “get the job done.”

Below are the items the Corporation mandates to be covered in any Orientation program:

- Specific skills and knowledge needed to perform service
- Member rights and responsibilities
- Program’s Code of Conduct
- Prohibited Activities
- Drug Free Workplace
- Suspension and Termination Rules
- Grievance Procedures
- Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Non Discrimination Activities
- Preventing Sexual Harassment Education
- Specific Safety procedures for member safety
- Diversity Awareness
- Inclusion and Reasonable Accommodation Requests
- Member Benefits
- Background Checks
- Member Wage Garnishment
- Introduction to National Service and AmeriCorps
- My AmeriCorps Portal (Loan Forbearance, Education Award and Interest Accrual)
- Time sheets

In order for your orientation program to be comprehensive and cover all pertinent aspects of service, the Commission strongly urges programs to include the following topics:

- National Service: The Big Picture
- History of Service in America (available in this manual)
- Roles and Responsibilities of Host Sites
- AmeriCorps Network of National and State programs, members and alumni
- AmeriCorps ethics and motto (Getting Things Done)
- Meaning of Illinois Community
- Civic Reflection and Civic Responsibility (Meaning of Service)
- Understanding the objectives of the program
- Program Rules, Regulations and Benefits
- Member Handbook
- Allowed Activities (available in the manual)
- Living allowance
- Staff and Member roles
- Completing National Trust Enrolment Forms
- Eligibility of full time members for HealthCare/Childcare

\*See Attachment #1. AmeriCorps Orientation Checklist

## **Affiliation with AmeriCorps National Network: Using the AmeriCorps Brand**

### **Service Gear**

Grant funds may be used to pay for a standard Service Gear package (AmeriCorps T-shirt, sweatshirt, hat, pin, decals, and buttons) for members. The Commission urges programs to provide this package to members. If the standard Service Gear package is not purchased, Programs must provide Members with a comparable package.

Members must wear service gear while providing direct service. You should direct members to wear their service gear at officially designated AmeriCorps and Commission events such as National Days of Service, National AmeriCorps Week activities, and National Service Recognition Day (Opening Day). Programs may allow members to wear their service gear at other times consistent with Corporation Guidelines. In addition, Member service sites should also display the AmeriCorps logo at all times.

All member service gear purchased with federal funds is required to include the AmeriCorps logo. National Service Gear provides an array of member service gear.

<http://www.nationalservicegear.org>

## Material Requests

Grant funds may be used to purchase informational material (brochures, application packets, posters, publications, etc.). On occasion, select items are free of charge.

Items can be ordered online at

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ac\\_materials\\_request.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ac_materials_request.pdf).

## Member Service Agreement

The Member Service Agreement is a critical part of administering AmeriCorps programs. Member Service Agreement provides the legal basis or contract by which the terms, conditions and rules regarding participation are delineated. This contract between the program and member is the legal document which would be used to resolve any issues between the program and a member. Because of its importance, The Commission has developed a template for the programs to use. The template includes all the required provisions required by the Corporation. **Its use by the programs is mandatory.**

Programs will need to complete various parts of the Agreement to make it specific to the Member's service. Programs will also need to attach/insert the position description to the Agreement. A signed and completed Member Service Agreement is required to be a part of every member file.

Member Service Agreement includes:

- Purpose of Agreement
- Minimum Qualifications
- Terms of Service
- Position Description
- Benefits; including, Living Allowance, Health Care Insurance, Child Care Allowance, Education Award, Loan Forbearance and Interest Payments.
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Rules of Conduct; including: Prohibited Activities, Code of Conduct, Civil Rights Requirements, Complaint Procedures, Rights of Beneficiaries, Non-Duplication and Non-Displacement, Drug Free Workplace, Criminal Drug Convictions, Disciplinary Action, and Suspension
- Release From Terms of Service; including, Release for Cause, and Release for Compelling Personal Circumstances
- Grievance Procedures
- Unemployment Benefits
- Edits to Member Service Agreement
- Authorization

\*See Attachment #2. Member Service Agreement Template

## Member Status

### Member Commitment

The process of enrolling new members in My AmeriCorps begins with recording an applicant's commitment into the AmeriCorps Commitment Tracker (ACT). The Corporation for National and Community Service describes a commitment as follows:

*A "commitment" is defined as signing a member service agreement with an individual or otherwise entering into a legally enforceable commitment as determined by state law. For example, a program may sign a letter of commitment with an individual to begin service in two months. State law may also deem other actions to be an enforceable commitment for an individual to serve.*

The Corporation requires the program to enter the person in the ACT **within 30 calendar days of the commitment signing and assign each member to a host site**. This serves to notify the Corporation of the agreement.

### Member Enrollment

All Member Enrollment Forms must be completed, signed, entered and approved in My AmeriCorps **within 30 days of a member entering or enrolling in the program**. Members must create a My AmeriCorps Portal account in order to complete their enrollment. Programs may enroll members through **October 31** without permission from the Commission. Programs must receive approval from the Commission prior to enrolling full-time members after **October 31**.

To request approval for **enrolling full-time members after October 31**, programs **must** submit a written request stating:

- The number and type of position to be filled
- Expected start and end date of the member
- How the member will be trained
- How many hours per week the member will need to serve to complete service

\*See Attachment #3. Member Enrollment Form

### Member Exit

All Member Exit Forms **must** be completed, signed, entered and approved in My AmeriCorps **within 30 days** of a member exiting the program. Members must create a My AmeriCorps Portal account in order to complete their exit information and to manage their education award. All members must complete their term of service within one year of their start date. This completion requirement is for all members. Members who have had their term suspended may increase their service agreement by the number of days suspended but not to exceed December 31<sup>st</sup> of the Program Year.



\*See Attachment #4. Member Exit Form

### **Change of Status**

Programs **must** have approval from the Commission prior to entering and approving a Change of Status Form in My AmeriCorps. Programs shall submit a written letter requesting approval. Refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions for policy guidance.

#### **Using the Illinois AmeriCorps \*State Member Early Exit Form**

Programs are required to complete the Illinois AmeriCorps \*State Member Early Exit Form within 30 days from the date the member took an early exit from the program. The completed form including member name, program name, reason for early exit, start date, exit date, total hours served, and any additional documentation must be submitted to the Serve Illinois Program Officer. The Program Officer will review and make a determination to either approve or disapprove. The program will be notified by the Program Officer of this decision. For those approved, this is simply done by returning the Illinois AmeriCorps \*State Member Early Exit Form with approval granted by signature of the Program Officer. Once completed, this form is required to be kept in the member file.

See Attachment #15. Illinois AmeriCorps\*State Member Early Exit Form

### **Release for Compelling Personal Circumstance**

Conditions attributable to the program or otherwise unforeseeable and beyond the participant's control, such as a natural disaster, a strike, relocation of a spouse, or the nonrenewal or premature closing of a project or program, that make completing a term unreasonably difficult or impossible;

#### **Those that the Corporation, has for public policy reasons, determined as such, including:**

- (A) Military service obligations;
- (B) Acceptance by a participant of an opportunity to make the transition from welfare to work; or
- (C) Acceptance of an employment opportunity by a participant serving in a program that includes in its approved objectives the promotion of employment among its participants.

#### **Compelling personal circumstances do not include leaving a program:**

- (A) To enroll in school;
- (B) To obtain employment, other than in moving from welfare to work or in leaving a program that includes in its approved objectives the promotion of employment among its participants; or
- (C) Because of dissatisfaction with the program.

### **Suspension**

As an alternative to releasing a participant, an AmeriCorps\*State/National program may, after determining that compelling personal circumstances exist, suspend the participant's term of

service for up to two years to allow the participant to complete service with the same or similar AmeriCorps program at a later time.

### **Release for cause**

- (1) A release for cause encompasses any circumstances other than compelling personal circumstances that warrant an individual's release from completing a term of service.
- (2) AmeriCorps programs must release for cause any participant who is convicted of a felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance during a term of service.
- (3) A participant who is released for cause may not receive any portion of the AmeriCorps education award or any other payment from the National Service Trust.
- (4) An individual who is released for cause must disclose that fact in any subsequent applications to participate in an AmeriCorps program. Failure to do so disqualifies the individual for an education award, regardless of whether the individual completes a term of service.
- (5) An AmeriCorps\*State/National participant released for cause may contest the program's decision by filing a grievance. Pending the resolution of a grievance procedure filed by an individual to contest a determination by a program to release the individual for cause, the individual's service is considered to be suspended. For this type of grievance, a program may not—while the grievance is pending or as part of its resolution—provide a participant with federally-funded benefits (including payments from the National Service Trust) beyond those attributable to service actually performed, without the program receiving written approval from the Corporation.
- (6) An individual's eligibility for a subsequent term of service in AmeriCorps will not be affected by release for cause from a prior term of service so long as the individual received a satisfactory end-of-27 term performance review as described in § 2522.220(c)(2) for the period served in the first term.
- (7) Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, a term of service from which an individual is released for cause counts as one of the terms of service described in § 2522.235 for which an individual may receive the benefits described in §§ 2522.240 through 2522.250.

### **Suspended service**

- (1) A program must suspend the service of an individual who faces an official charge of a violent felony (e.g., rape, homicide) or sale or distribution of a controlled substance.
- (2) A program must suspend the service of an individual who is convicted of possession of a controlled substance.
- (3) An individual may not receive a living allowance or other benefits, and may not accrue service hours, during a period of suspension under this provision.

### **Reinstatement**

- (1) A program may reinstate an individual whose service was suspended under paragraph (c) (1) of this section if the individual is found not guilty or if the charge is dismissed.
- (2) A program may reinstate an individual whose service was suspended under paragraph (c) (2) of this section only if the individual demonstrates the following:
  - (i) For an individual who has been convicted of a first offense of the possession of a controlled substance, the individual must have enrolled in a drug rehabilitation program;

(ii) For an individual who has been convicted for more than one offense of the possession of a controlled substance, the individual must have successfully completed a drug rehabilitation program.

### **Release prior to serving 15 percent of a term of service**

If a participant is released for reasons other than misconduct prior to completing 15 percent of a term of service, the term will not be considered one of the terms of service described in § 2522.220(b) for which an individual may receive the benefits described in § 2522.240 through § 2522.250.

### **Term of Service Limit**

(a) *General limitation.* An individual may receive the benefits described in § 2522.240 through § 2522.250 for no more than four terms of service in an AmeriCorps State and National program, regardless of whether those terms were served on full-, part-, or reduced part-time basis.

(b) *Early release.* Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, a term of service from which an individual is released for compelling personal circumstances or for cause counts as one of the terms of service for which an individual may receive the benefits described in § 2522.240 through § 2522.250.

Maximum Number of Terms:

In blending summer, part-time, and full-time terms, you can serve a maximum:

- 4 with AmeriCorps state and national
- 2 with VISTA (you can do a third term with VISTA and elect not to receive an Education Award. See our VISTA resource for more information.)
- 2 with NCCC

If you max out the number of terms you serve with one stream of service, you can start a new term with another and receive additional awards -- as long as you have not yet reached the full value of two full-time awards. You can also serve terms (and elect not to receive an award) up the limits shown above.

For more information visit: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ed-award/multiple-terms>

*Note: If you make any changes to My AmeriCorps, you must add that same information to the member file. The My AmeriCorps system and the member files should include the same information.*

## Member Slots

The allowable slot types and associated FTEs or MSYs are listed in the table below.

Service Term	Service Hours	FTEs or MSYs
Full Time (FT)	1700	1
Half Time (HT)	900	.5
Reduced Half Time (RHT)	675	0.38
Quarter Time (QT)	450	0.26
Minimum Time (MT)	300	0.21

## Corrections

Please contact your Program Officer for slot corrections.

## Slot Conversions

The Commission may approve occasional changes of currently enrolled members to lesser-term slots. The program must submit a written request to the Commission for a slot conversion. The Commission and the program must take into account the impact on the program quality. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) will not cover health care or childcare costs for less than full-time members.

Programs may not request a transfer of currently enrolled members to a lesser-term status simply to provide a pro-rated education award if the member would otherwise be released for cause. It is also not allowed to request to convert a slot to a lesser-term slot at the end of a member's term of service in order to award a pro-rated education award when the member has not completed the hours required by their original term.

Changing less than full-time members to a greater slot type is discouraged because it is very difficult to manage, unless done very early in the member's term of service. The Commission may approve such changes only in extenuating circumstances as long as the program's current budget can accommodate such changes. The program must request the slot conversion in writing. Keep in mind that a member's minimum 1700 hours must be completed within 12 months of the member's original start date.

## Unfilled Slot Conversions

Programs must request an unfilled slot conversion request in writing to the Commission. For example one full-time position can be converted to up to three quarter-time positions. All conversions must be Trust neutral, are subject to availability of funds in the Trust, and must comply with all assumptions on which Trust prudence and continued solvency are predicated. The total number of MSYs and education award amounts in the grant may not increase as a result of the slot conversion.

For example: 1 full-time member position (1 MSY) may be converted into 2 half-time slots (2 x .5 members = 1 MSY) or 1 full-time member position may not be converted into 4 quarter-time positions as the education awards would total more than the original (4 X .2646); in this example, the maximum number of allowable quarter-time positions would be 3.

Grantees may also combine and convert less than full-time positions to full-time positions as long as such changes do not increase the total MSYs or total education award amounts awarded in the grant.

### **Refill Slots**

Eligible AmeriCorps State and National programs that have fully enrolled their awarded member slots are allowed to replace any member who terminates service before completing 30 percent of his/her term (effective May 17, 2007) provided that the member who terminates is not eligible for and does not receive a pro-rated education award. Programs may not refill the same slot more than once.

As a fail-safe mechanism to ensure that the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) resources is available in the national service trust to finance any member's education award, CNCS will suspend refilling if either: the total AmeriCorps enrollment reaches 97 percent of awarded slots or the number of refills reaches five percent of awarded slots.

### **Tutoring Requirements**

A tutor is defined as someone whose primary goal is to increase academic achievement in reading or other core subjects through planned, consistent, one-to-one or small-group sessions and activities that build on the academic strengths of students in kindergarten through 12th grade, and target their academic needs. A tutor does not include someone engaged in other academic support activities, such as mentoring and after-school program support, whose primary goal is something other than increasing academic achievement. For example, providing a safe place for children is not tutoring, even if some of the program activities focus on homework help.

#### **§ 2522.940 What are the requirements for a program in which AmeriCorps members serve as tutors?**

A program in which members engage in tutoring for children must:

- (a) Articulate appropriate criteria for selecting and qualifying tutors, including the requirements in §2522.910 of this subpart;
- (b) Identify the strategies or tools it will use to assess student progress and measure student outcomes;
- (c) Certify that the tutoring curriculum and pre-service and in-service training content are high-quality and research based, consistent with the instructional program of the local educational agency or with State academic content standards;
- (d) Include appropriate member supervision by individuals with expertise in tutoring;
- (e) Provide specialized high-quality and research-based, member pre-service and in-service training consistent with the activities the member will perform;

(f) Curriculum must be consistent with both state academic standards and the instruction program of the local educational agency.

(g) Certify that members serving as tutors possess a minimum of a high school diploma.  
Serve America tutor

### § 2522.920 Are there any exceptions to the qualifications requirements?

The qualifications requirements in §2522.910 of this subpart do not apply to a member who is a K–12 student tutoring younger children in the school or after school as part of a structured, school-managed cross-grade tutoring program.

## Living Allowance

Generally, you must provide a living allowance between \$12,100 and \$24,200 per year to your full-time members.

A living allowance is *not* required for less than full-time members. If you choose to provide less than full-time members with a living allowance, you may use the following chart as a guide.

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Total Living Allowance	Maximum Total Living Allowance
Full Time	1700	\$12,530	\$25,060
Half Time	900	N/A	\$13,265
Reduced Half Time	675	N/A	\$9,950
Quarter Time	450	N/A	\$6,635
Minimum Time	300	N/A	\$4,420

Programs occasionally request the ability to deduct amounts from living allowances for absences and other purposes. Programs may make deductions to the *non-federal portion* of living allowances or other payments made to AmeriCorps members. Programs **may not deduct any federal** portion of the living allowance paid by Corporation funds.

Before making any deductions, programs are advised to consider implications related to the treatment of employment laws. Further, programs making deductions in this fashion, it may be required to increase their matching funds. Please contact your Program Officer for more information.

## Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

### Amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

The amount of the AmeriCorps Education Award depends on the length of a member's term of service. The current amount of the Education Award for each term of service is as follows:

<b>Enrollment Status</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Award</b>
Full-Time	1700	\$5,730.00
Half-Time	900	\$2,865.00
Reduced Half-Time	675	\$2,182.78
Quarter-Time	450	\$1,515.55
Minimum-Time	300	\$1,212.44

Payments made from AmeriCorps Education Awards are considered taxable income in the year that the Corporation makes the payment to the school or loan holder. A member serving in a full-time term of service is required to complete service within 12 months.

### Eligibility

Members are eligible for a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award if they successfully complete their term of service in accordance with the member service agreement with one of the following approved AmeriCorps programs:

AmeriCorps\*State and National  
 AmeriCorps\*VISTA  
 AmeriCorps\*NCCC

As the member uses the AmeriCorps Education Award, they must have received a high school diploma, or the equivalent of such diploma.

### Award Limitations

Currently, the maximum numbers of terms that you can serve in each AmeriCorps program are:

- four for AmeriCorps State and National;
- two for VISTAs
- two for NCCC

Full-time, half-time, reduced half-time, quarter time, and minimum time terms of service each count as one term of service.

- Generally, if you are released for cause before completing your term of service and do not receive an education award, that term of service counts as one of your terms.

- The Trust does not make payments to anyone other than qualified schools and loan holders. See your financial aid counselor for information on how they handle disbursements and reimbursements.
- If you withdraw from the school at which you have used the education award, the school may be required to refund the Trust. If any refund is owed, it is credited to your education award "account," and is subject to the award's original expiration date (seven years from the date the award was earned). For general information on how withdrawing from school may affect your student financial aid, ask your financial aid counselor or refer to the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Handbook.
- Under certain circumstances, you can use the education award to study outside the U.S. Contact the **National Service Hotline** at 1-800-942-2677 for further information.
- You have seven years to use the education award from the date of your completion of service. You can divide up your award and use portions of it at different times, as long as it is for authorized expenditures within the specified time period. You could, for example, apply a portion of it to existing qualified student loans, and save the remainder to pay for authorized college costs a few years down the road.

### Transfer of the Education Award

The Serve America Act allows for the transfer of AmeriCorps State and National and Silver Service education awards under certain conditions. Basically, the person who earned the award has to have been at least 55 years old **when they began the term of service** and the person to whom the award is transferred has to be the transferring individual's child, grandchild, or foster child.

To transfer an award, an individual must:

- have earned an education award in an AmeriCorps State and National or a Silver Scholar term of service;
- have been at least 55 year of age before beginning the term of service for which the award is attached;
- have begun this term of service on or after October 1, 2009;
- transfer the award before the original expiration date;
- designate all or a portion of the unused award for the transfer; and
- complete the on-line forms authorizing the transfer, which includes providing information and certifying eligibility to make the transfer.

### Taxes

Remember, the IRS has determined that payments made from an education award are considered to be included in a member's taxable income in the year the payment is made to the school or loan holder. Interest payments are also considered taxable. This increase in your income could affect your tax liability for that year. See the web page on tax implications for additional information.



## Frequently Asked Questions

Understanding and learning how to use and transfer Education awards can be very challenging as every award winners situation and intended use can be different and unique. The Corporation has developed a comprehensive FAQ to provide direction and clarification on Term Limitations, Award Amounts and Values, Transfers, Extensions, Allowable Use and Using My AmeriCorps Portal to access Awards. Go to: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/segal-ameri-corps-education-award/segal-ameri-corps-education-award-faq>

## Colleges and Universities that Provide Scholarships and Resources to AmeriCorps Alumni

Colleges and Universities across the country actively recruit talented AmeriCorps alumni for their reputation and perseverance, drive and proven active citizenship. Because of these qualities in AmeriCorps Alumni, many of these institutions seek Alumni and offer them a variety of incentives such as service scholarships or matching tuition funding to the amount of their Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Currently there are 112 colleges and universities that match the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for their students. The complete list may be found by going to <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/segal-ameri-corps-education-award/matchin-institutions>.

*For more details relating to the Education Award Amount, Eligibility, and Limitations, please go to <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/segal-ameri-corps-education-award>.*

## Child Care Benefit Program

The AmeriCorps Child Care Benefit Program is available for qualified, active full-time AmeriCorps members who need the benefit to serve. To qualify for this benefit the member must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Member's household income must not exceed 75% of the state's mediana income for a family of the same size. In determining household income the member's living allowance is disregarded.
- Member must not currently receive a child care subsidy from another source at the time of acceptance into the program (including a parent or guardian) which would continue to be provided while the member serves in the program
- Member must be the parent or legal guardian of a child under the age of 13
- Child must reside with the member

Child care benefits are paid to qualified child care providers for all or a part of the member's child care costs during their active time of service with AmeriCorps. These payments are paid directly to child care providers and are not paid to the member. Child care providers must meet eligibility requirements as regulated under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990.

GAP Solutions, Inc. (GAPSI) administers the AmeriCorps Child Care Benefits Program for the Corporation. Members must apply directly to GAPSI for the benefit. Interested and eligible

members should call (855) 886-0687 toll free for more information or visit their website at [www.americorpschildcare.com](http://www.americorpschildcare.com)

## Health Care Coverage

Except for EAPs, Professional Corps, or members covered under a collective bargaining agreement, the grantee must provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to those members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who are not otherwise covered by a healthcare policy at the time the member begins his/her term of service. The grantee must also provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who lose coverage during their term of service as a result of service or through no deliberate act of their own. CNCS will not cover healthcare costs for dependent coverage.

Less-than-full-time members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (e.g. a full-time summer project) are eligible for healthcare benefits. Programs may provide health insurance to less-than-full-time members serving in a full-time capacity, but they are not required to do so. For purposes of this provision, a member is serving in a full-time capacity when his/her regular term of service will involve performing service on a normal full-time schedule for a period of six weeks or more. A member may be serving in a full-time capacity without regard to whether his/her agreed term of service will result in a full-time Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

Any of the following health insurance options will satisfy the requirement for health insurance for full-time AmeriCorps members (or less than full-time members serving in a full-time capacity): staying on parents' or spouse plan; insurance obtained through the Federal Health Insurance Marketplace of at least the Bronze level plan; insurance obtained through private insurance broker; Medicaid, Medicare or military benefits. By July 1, 2015, all AmeriCorps programs must have MEC coverage. For fiscal year 2014, programs must document evidence of working towards MEC compliance.

Per a May 14, 2014 notice, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued guidance that created a special healthcare enrollment period (through December 31, 2014) for all AmeriCorps State and National members. Starting Service: If you start AmeriCorps State and National service after the open enrollment period which ended on March 30, 2014, you have 60 days from the service start date to sign-up for healthcare coverage through the federal healthcare marketplace.

Ending Service: At the conclusion of service, you will also be able to purchase a qualified health plan from the federal healthcare marketplace outside of the annual open enrollment period. You have 60 days from the service end date to sign-up for healthcare coverage.

If coverage is being provided via the Healthcare Marketplace, and thus third party payment is not an option, programs must develop a process to reimburse members for monthly premiums. Reimbursements for health insurance premiums are considered taxable income for the member, and programs must have a way to document such reimbursements.

## **Federal Healthcare Marketplace- Special Enrollment Period and Hardship Exemptions**

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued guidance that creates a special healthcare enrollment period for all AmeriCorps State and National Members.

**Starting Service:** If you started your AmeriCorps State and National service after the open enrollment period which ended on March 30, 2014, you have 60 days from your service start date to sign-up for healthcare coverage through the federal healthcare marketplace.

**Ending Service:** At the conclusion of your service, you will also be able to purchase a qualified health plan from the federal healthcare marketplace outside of the annual open enrollment period. You have 60 days from your service end date to sign-up for healthcare coverage. For example, if you conclude your service this summer, you will now be able to purchase a qualified health plan at the conclusion of your service, rather than waiting until open enrollment season.

The guidance also states that HHS is exercising its authority to establish a hardship exemption for national service members who did not have minimum essential coverage (MEC) in 2014 (through December 31, 2014). This hardship exemption means that you will not be subject to the Individual Shared Responsibility payment for not maintaining MEC coverage in 2014 depending on which state you live in.

To request the hardship exemption, use the hardship exemption form available at <http://www.healthcare.gov/exemptions> and select reason #14. When prompted, fill in “AMERICORPS” as the reason.

To read the guidance, please visit: <http://www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Resources/Regulations-and-Guidance/Downloads/SEP-and-hardship-FAQ-5-1-2014.pdf>

For more information on affordable health care coverage for AmeriCorps members under the Affordable Care Act please visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/current-members/health-care-options> and the FAQ for information on healthcare coverage for State and National AmeriCorps members is available at:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/AmeriCorps\\_Health\\_Care\\_FAQs\\_5\\_12\\_2014.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/AmeriCorps_Health_Care_FAQs_5_12_2014.pdf)

## **Loan Forbearance/ Interest Accrual**

### **Loan Forbearance**

AmeriCorps members who are earning a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award are uniquely eligible for one type of postponement of the repayment of their qualified student loan called forbearance. During the forbearance period, interest on the principle amount of the loan continues to accrue. If a member successfully completes their term of service and earns an Education Award, the National Service Trust will pay all or a portion of the interest that has accrued on the qualified student loans during this period. This accrued interest paid by the Trust, like the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award itself, is subject to income taxes.

AmeriCorps members enrolled in an AmeriCorps project are eligible for forbearance for most federally-backed student loans. For other types of student loans, members must ask their loan holder if their AmeriCorps service qualifies for a deferment or forbearance.

This postponement of the student loan payment (forbearance) is not automatic. Members must request it from their loan holders by completing the National Service Forbearance Request Form. Members may complete the Forbearance Request Form online by accessing their My AmeriCorps Portal.

The National Service Trust does not grant forbearances. Loan holders do. The Trust merely verifies membership in AmeriCorps and forwards the documents to the loan companies. The Trust is able to verify membership only when it has proof from a project that the individual is an AmeriCorps member.

### **Interest Accrual Payments**

AmeriCorps members who have earned a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award are eligible to have the Trust pay up to 100% of the interest that accrued on their qualified student loan during their service. To have the Trust pay all or a portion of the interest accrued on a qualified student loans, the Trust must receive verification from the Program indicating the member has completed their service and are eligible for an award. A member and their lender also must complete the Interest Accrual Form, which indicates the amount of interest accrued during your service period. The loan holder sends this completed form to the Trust for payment.

For further information regarding Forbearance and Interest Accrual Payments, visit: <http://edaward.org/guidebook/forbearance>.

### **Defaulted Loans**

Most student loans that are in default are not eligible for forbearance. If a member has loans that have gone into default before they begin their AmeriCorps service, they can attempt to negotiate an arrangement with the loan holder or collection agency to bring the loan out of default so forbearance can be granted and interest paid. Also, members can use their Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to repay defaulted student loans as long as the loans meet the definition of qualified student loans.

### **My AmeriCorps Portal**

In order to prevent a delay in the processing of interest payments, individuals must request payments electronically using our on-line system, My AmeriCorps. This is a secure, fast, and user friendly method for requesting interest payments to be remitted to your loan holders. It also provides electronic records of payments requested and paid and there are no forms to mail in. The Corporation for National & Community Service cannot guarantee the prompt and accurate processing of requests for interest payments using paper forms. Payments requested by paper can take up to six months or more for processing and are less secure.

It is fast and easy to access your National Service Participant account in My AmeriCorps. To register, go to <http://my.americorps.gov/mp/login.do> and click on “Register to create a new Member/Alum account” and follow the instructions.

## Prohibited Activities

The Corporation acknowledges that religious and political activities play a positive role in healthy communities, that religion and politics are defining characteristics of many community organizations (faith-based and secular), and that religious and political belief and action are central to many AmeriCorps members lives.

However, it is important that AmeriCorps programs and their members do not appear to be taking sides religiously or politically. Consequently, a number of limitations on the activities that AmeriCorps programs can support and in which members can engage while earning service hours, or when otherwise, representing AmeriCorps must be imposed. AmeriCorps members are free to pursue these activities on their own initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-AmeriCorps funds. The AmeriCorps logo should not be worn by members when participating in prohibited activities.

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, members accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the

Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities, and the grantee may not use grant funds to support the following activities (45 CFR 2520.65):

- a. Attempting to influence legislation;
- b. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- c. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- d. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- e. Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- f. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- g. Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- h. Providing a direct benefit to—
  - i. A business organized for profit;
  - ii. A labor union;
  - iii. A partisan political organization;
  - iv. A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at

- their own initiative; and
- v. An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph g. above, unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
- i. Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- j. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
- k. Such other activities as CNCS may prohibit.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

## Allowable Activities

After reading the list of prohibited activities there may still be questions about what kind of service work can be credited to the Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards hours.

***The most important piece of information to relay to the members is that at least 80% of their time must be spent doing direct service and the other 20% can be credited to education and/or training that they receive that relates to their work or to AmeriCorps. No more than 20 percent of the aggregate of all AmeriCorps member service hours in your program, as reflected in the member enrollments in the National Service Trust, may be spent in education and training activities.***

Direct service is work that addresses human need, the environment, public safety, and/or education in one form or another. It is working directly with people to make change, or doing work that is involved in making that direct change. It can be outreach, case management, training, teaching, tutoring, mediating, cleaning, counseling, recruiting volunteers, catching up on paperwork related to clients, preparing for class, coaching, listening, cooking, serving, providing health care, food, clothing, etc. Direct service hours should constitute 80% or more of an AmeriCorps member's total hours served. The remainder will be *indirect* service hours.

Indirect service hours, or education and training, hours are only applicable when they reflect the AmeriCorps service that the member credits to the education award he or she will receive. Any on-the-job training that refers to direct service would be part of this category. All orientations, including the AmeriCorps orientation, would be included, as well as any state or regional trainings, seminars, or workshops pertaining to issues related to direct service. Examples would be conflict resolution seminars, teacher development days, team-building exercises or a class on training techniques. Only 20% of all member's credited service hours can be dedicated to education and training, even if more hours have been spent in this area.

Members may raise funds directly in support of service activities that meet local, environmental, educational, public safety, homeland security, or other human needs. This fundraising should not exceed 10% of their service hours. Examples of fundraising activities that members may perform include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. Seeking donations for of books from companies and individuals for a program in which volunteers tutor children to read;
- b. Writing a grant proposal to a foundation to secure resources to support the training of volunteers;
- c. Securing supplies and equipment from the community to enable volunteers to help build houses for low-income individuals;
- d. Securing financial resources from the community to assist a faith-based organization in launching or expanding a program that provides social services to the members of the community and is delivered, in whole or in part, through the members of the faith-based organization; or
- e. Seeking donations from alumni of the program for specific service projects being performed by current members.

AmeriCorps members may not:

- a. Raise funds for living allowances or for an organization's general (as opposed to project) operating expenses or endowment;
- b. Write a grant application to the Corporation or to any other Federal agency.

All AmeriCorps service activities will take place within the State of Illinois or Iowa only.

All member questions should be directed to program directors.

# Member Supervision and Responsibilities

**Member Supervision**  
**Grievance Procedure**  
**Drug Free Work Place**  
**Wage Garnishment**  
**Member Timesheets**  
**Continual Training of Members**  
**Member Death or Injury**  
**Performance Reviews**



## **Member Supervision**

Programs must provide members with adequate supervision throughout their service year. The groundwork for this supervision is laid during Orientation training and when going through and completing the Member Agreement. Programs are encouraged to routinely and regularly communicate with members and sites, not just when something happens or is needed. Regular communication provides opportunity to get to know members and sites so that relationships are developed. Communication can happen in a number of different ways. It can be at a distance through phone or webinars. It can be in person at the site or at another location. It can be in a groups or one on one. It can be a part of training or regularly scheduled meetings. Communication is critical in getting important messages out to your members, encouraging responsibility and expanding their opportunities for growth.

## **Grievance Procedure**

In accordance with 45CFR 2540.230 all programs must establish and implement a process for filing and adjudicating grievances from members, labor organizations and other interested parties. This grievance process may include dispute resolution such as mediation, facilitation, assisted negotiation and neutral evaluation.

To aid programs in developing and establishing their grievance policy and procedures, the Commission has implemented the use of a mandatory grievance procedure for members. These grievance procedures are part of the mandatory Member Service Agreement to be used by all programs. By using this template and having the member and program representative sign this agreement and then having this agreement in the member's file, the program will be compliance with the federal regulations.

In addition to the use of the template, the program must develop and establish a grievance procedure for the program that is inclusive of members, labor organizations and other interested parties which will include more detailed specific to their program and its structure.

To ensure all AmeriCorps programs are in compliance with federal regulations regarding grievance procedures, member files will be reviewed during monitoring site visits to ensure members have signed a member agree service agreement containing the grievance policy and procedures.

The Commission encourages programs to informally resolve disputes through the use of such as mediation or facilitation. These means of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) must be initiated within 45 days of the date of the alleged occurrence. At the initial session of the ADR proceedings, the party must be advised in writing of the right to file a grievance and right to arbitration. If the matter is resolved and a written agreement is reached, the party will agree to forego filing a grievance.

While going through the grievance procedure, be sure to make it very clear to all parties what stage they are in, what the time-line is, and what the next steps are (i.e. whether they are in mediation, grievance hearing or binding arbitration).

There are time limits that must strictly be adhered to during the grievance process. Except for a grievance that alleges fraud or criminal activity, a grievance must be made no later than one year after the date of the alleged occurrence. If a hearing is held on a grievance, it must be conducted no later than 30 calendar days after the filing of such grievance. A decision on any such filed grievance must be made no later than 60 days after the filing.

The grievant can request binding arbitration if decision is adverse to grievant or if decision is not reached within 60 calendar days. The arbitrator must be independent and selected by mutual consent of the parties involved. If the parties cannot agree on the arbitrator, the Commission will appoint one within 15 days of receiving the request. The arbitration hearing must be held no later than 45 days after request for arbitration and no later 30 days after the arbitrator's appointment. An arbitration decision must be made within 30 days after the commencement of arbitration proceedings. The cost of arbitration must be divided evenly between the parties, unless the aggrieved party prevails. In that case the program will be responsible for paying the total cost of the proceedings including any attorney fees of the prevailing party.

In the event an aggrieved party files a grievance after participating in an informal dispute resolution process, the neutral party may not participate in the formal grievance proceeding. In addition, no communication or proceeding of the informal dispute resolution process may be referred to or introduced into evidence at a grievance or arbitration proceeding.

**NOTE:** Programs are **required** to contact the Commission if a member starts a grievance procedure process. The written grievance should be sent to the Commission and any correspondence with the member should also be included. All grievances that allege fraud or criminal activity will be brought to the attention of the Corporation.

\*See Attachment #5. Grievance Procedure Review Checklist

## Drug-Free Workplace

In accordance with the AmeriCorps Provisions, programs are required to give notice about the Drug-Free Workplace Act to members and to conduct a drug-free awareness program. This program is a mandatory part of the orientation for members.

If a member is arrested for or convicted of a drug offense, he or she must notify the Program Director in writing within five (5) days. Appropriate action must be taken including suspension and referral to a drug rehabilitation program, or release for cause consistent with the Corporation's rule on termination and suspension of service.

The conviction **must be reported to the Commission**, in writing, within ten (10) days. The Commission will then notify the Corporation in writing.

## Wage Garnishment

Any type of garnishment of the federal portion of a member's living allowance is not permitted due to issues of sovereign immunity. Sovereign immunity protects the property interests of the United States from suits to which it has not consented. The federal government has a continuing

property interest in AmeriCorps grant funds until they are expended in accordance with the grant's terms. With respect to the living allowance, the Corporation has a property interest in the federal share of the member's living allowance, until the AmeriCorps member actually receives it, and this property interest is protected by sovereign immunity. Only Congress may wave this immunity.

Whether or not the non-federal portion of the living allowance—i.e. the funds provided as match at the program level—is subject to garnishment is a state law issue. Because the Corporation for National and Community Service is not a party to this action, and because it involves application of state law, programs should consult their own local counsel.

## Member Timesheets

The Commission will conduct random reviews of member timesheets. If problems are found during the initial review such as inconsistent calculations, unauthorized timesheets, prohibited activities, etc., it will be considered a compliance issue and may require a complete review of all member timesheets.

The review of timesheets will include the following:

Do all timesheets include:

- **Member's original signature and date**
- **A secure connection for the member to submit timesheets**
- **Guidelines for submitting timesheets noted on the sheet**
- **Member service activities listed in line with the approved objectives and are not prohibited activities**
- **Members on target to attain their intended number of service hours**
- **Tracking the service activities to ensure adherence to the 20% rule related to training**
- **Tracking the service activities to ensure adherence to the 10% rule related to fundraising?**

**\*See Attachment #6. Sample Member Timesheet**

## Continual Training of Members

All programs are responsible for the continual training of their Members throughout their terms of service. Serve Illinois recommends that training of members be done on both an individual and group basis. Training hours may not take up more than 20% of the Member's time, and training may not exceed 20% of your program's aggregate of all Member service hours.

Listed below are items that Serve Illinois **recommends** to be covered during a members' term of service:

- **Civic Engagement/ Reflection/ Meaning of Service**
- **Disability Inclusion**

## End of Term Training of Members

All programs are responsible for the end of term training of their Members. Serve Illinois recommends that training of members be done on both an individual and group basis. Training hours may not take up more than 20% of the Member's time, and training may not exceed 20% of your program's aggregate of all Member service hours.

Listed below are items that Serve Illinois **mandates** to be covered during a members' term of service:

- **Life After AmeriCorps**
- **Résumé building**
- **Seeking Employment**
- **Continuing your service after AmeriCorps**

## Member Death or Injury

The grantee must immediately report any member deaths or serious injuries to the Commission's Program Officer.

## Performance Reviews

The program must conduct and keep a record of at least a midterm and an end-of-term written evaluation of each member's performance for Full and Half Time members and an end-of-term written evaluation for less than Half-time members. Evaluations should be signed by both the member and the supervisor and placed in the member file. The end of term evaluation should address, at a minimum, the following:

- Has member completed the required number of hours?
- Has member satisfactorily completed assignments?
- Has member met other performance criteria as communicated at the beginning of the term of service?

# Public Assistance Programs

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits (SNAP)**

**Public Housing**

**Unemployment Benefits**

**Public Assistance Programs**

**Supplemental Security Income**

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits (SNAP)

A member's SNAP benefits are not affected because a member receives the AmeriCorps living allowance. This means that a member's benefits should not be decreased, increased, or terminated because he or she receives the living allowance.

<http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/handbook/index.php?page=sectionxi>

## Public Housing

AmeriCorps members' benefits do not affect a member's eligibility for federal, need-based housing assistance, such as Section 8 housing and other federally subsidized housing. This means that the living stipend cannot be taken into consideration when a member applies for or if a member's eligibility for public housing is being re-examined. This is a federal rule and is the same in all states.

\*See Attachment #7. Federal Register, DOCID fr20ap01-79

## Unemployment Benefits

AmeriCorps members are **not entitled** to unemployment benefits. The Corporation for National and Community Service has interpreted federal legislation to mean that there is no employer-employee relationship between members and programs. Illinois has chosen to agree with this interpretation and denies unemployment benefits to members; hence, programs are not required to pay unemployment taxes.

\*See Attachment #8. Illinois Administrative Rules, Section 2732.215

## Public Assistance Programs

### Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

A member's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits are affected by the AmeriCorps living allowance. For TANF purposes, the living allowance is considered non-exempt earned income. This means that for every \$3.00 a member earns before taxes and other payroll deductions, the TANF grant is reduced by \$1.00. For example, the TANF grant of a member that makes \$600 per month before payroll deductions would be decreased by \$200 (one-third of \$600).

Serving as an AmeriCorps member is considered an allowable work activity as long as a member serves at least 30 hours per week (effective October 1999). This means that the lifetime benefit clock for members serving at least 30 hours per week will be stopped.

Federal legislation allows each state to determine how AmeriCorps benefits will affect TANF grants and if serving as an AmeriCorps member is an allowable work activity. The information above is for Illinois only and will vary by state.

## Supplemental Security Income

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a federal program that provides a monthly cash benefit to low-income individuals who are aged, blind, or who have a disability. Prior to the passage of the Heroes Earnings and Relief Tax Act of 2008 (HEART Act), receiving an AmeriCorps living allowance could disqualify an individual from eligibility. Under the HEART Act, the Social Security Administration will ignore an individual's receipt of AmeriCorps benefits for purposes of SSI 42 eligibility. The Heart Act excludes "any benefit (whether cash or in-kind)" and so covers the living allowance, health insurance, child care, and the education award (and related interest payments).

Additionally, SSI recipients who serve in AmeriCorps State and National and National Civilian Community Corps automatically qualify for the Student Child Earned Income Exclusion if they meet applicable age and marital status requirements.

SSI recipients who are (1) under the age of 22 and (2) neither married nor the head of a household are eligible for the student earned income exclusion, which excludes from countable earned income \$1,290 per month and up to \$5,200 per year (amounts as of January 1, 2001). This exclusion may be combined with existing SSI work incentives and other income disregard rules, which should encourage more young people with disabilities to participate in AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC.

Note that the Student Child Earned Income Exclusion policy change does not affect AmeriCorps VISTA members, whose benefits are already fully excluded from income under section 404 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act.

Any portion of an education award used by an SSI recipient to pay for tuition, fees, and other necessary education expenses (not including room and board, or repaying student loans) will not count as income. Any portion of the education award that is not used for tuition, fees, or other necessary educational expenses counts as income in the month that it is used. For general questions about SSI or the terms used in this answer, go to <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/index.htm>

See <http://www.nationalservice.gov/site-policy-and-notice-website-policies-procedures/accessibility> for information regarding the HEART Act.

# Reporting and Records Retention

- Match**
- Budget Modifications**
- Fiscal Reports**
- Progress Reports**
- Final Reports**
- Staff Timesheets**
- Deductions to Living Allowance**
- Sustainability**
- My AmeriCorps and EGrAMS**
  - Member Reporting Information
  - EGrAMS Due Dates
- Record Retention**
- Resources**



## Match

Programs must meet proposed match **every quarter**.

Programs that are not meeting proposed levels of match at the end of a quarter should include the following comments in their Periodic Expense Report (PER) and Federal Financial Report (FFR):

1. An explanation as to why match was not met, and
2. Plans to meet match the next quarter.

Programs that do not meet match requirements and do not include comments in their PER and FFR reports will be required to submit a letter addressing the two issues noted above.

Corporation funds may be reduced by the Serve Illinois Commission for failure to meet the proposed or minimum match requirements. This would be done to bring the program in line with the match requirements as submitted in the application.

Programs must provide and account for the matching funds as agreed upon in the approved application. This means that the proposed match included in the application must be met even if it exceeds the minimum match requirement.

Cash or in-kind matching contributions that exceed the required minimum will be considered voluntary cost share. Programs that cannot meet the amount of voluntary cost share proposed in their application may submit a request to reduce the amount of cost share their program will contribute. However, the cost share/match cannot be reduced below the minimum percentage requirements as indicated above. See the budget modifications section for more information.

### Overall Cost Match

Subject to the requirements of § 2521.45, your overall share of program costs will increase as of the fourth consecutive year that you receive a grant, according to the timetable below. The program must have contributed matching resources by the end of a grant period in an amount equal to the combined total of the proposed or minimum overall annual match for each year of the grant period.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
<b>Minimum Overall Share</b>	24%	24%	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

### Alternative Match

If your program is unable to meet the match requirements and is located in a rural or a severely economically distressed community, you may apply to the Corporation for a waiver that would require you to increase the overall amount of your share of program costs beginning in the seventh consecutive year that you receive a grant. Contact your Program Officer if you believe you meet the requirements and are interested in applying. If you receive alternative match, you will follow the timetable below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
<b>Alternative Minimum Overall Share</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	29%	31%	33%	35%

### Administration Cost Match

Programs may bill a maximum 5.26% of the Corporation funds actually expended in the operation of the program to the administration line of the budget. Programs must meet this requirement **by the end of the program year**.

Each quarter that programs have more than 5.26% of grant funds charged to Administration, a letter will be sent noting the fact and reminding the program it must be in compliance by the end of the program year. Programs will be required to respond to this letter with an explanation as to why the 5.26% has been exceeded and plans for compliance by the end of the program year.

Corporation funds in this line may be reduced at the end of the program year if the 5.26% maximum is exceeded. This would be done to bring the program in line with allowable maximum Administrative charge against Corporation funds.

Effective July 1, 2013, the Serve Illinois Commission will retain 1% of the Federal Funds available to programs for Administrative Costs.

### Federal Indirect Cost Match

If you have a Federally Approved Indirect Cost (IDC) rate and choose to use it, the IDC rate will constitute documentation of your administrative costs including the 5.26% maximum payable by the Corporation. Please provide a copy of your IDC rate letter to your Program Officer.

### Budget Modifications

The Serve Illinois Commission understands that AmeriCorps programs must sometimes modify their budget during the program year.

These budget modification guidelines summarize the AmeriCorps Provisions on this issue. They

are intended only as guidance and are not a substitute for the Provisions or other federal rules and regulations. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### **Deadline and Process**

Programs must submit budget modification request to the Commission in a timely manner. While budget modification requests will be accepted on a rolling basis, programs are requested to submit budget modifications that require the **approval of the Corporation for National and Community Service by April 1 of the current program year**. This will provide sufficient time for the Commission and the Corporation to review the request before members complete their terms of service.

Programs submitting a budget modification request must submit the following:

- A letter detailing the request and explaining why the modification is needed,
- A revised budget form, and
- A revised budget narrative.

**Programs should not consider budget modification requests approved until written notice is received from the Commission and the Corporation.**

### **Line Item Changes**

Programs may move funds between line items if the modification is less than 10% of the total federal award. Keep in mind that modifications must be approved by the Commission in EGrAMS before they are considered effective. For example, a program that receives a \$100,000 grant may move up to \$10,000 between line items as long as the transfer is in compliance with all other applicable. Programs who wish to transfer funds totaling more than 10% of the federal award must receive prior approval from the Commission and the Corporation. (OMB Circular A-11, Subpart C, Section 25.) The Commission requests that funds slated for Member Stipend remain within Section II-A (Member Cost).

### **Sub-granting Funds**

Programs must receive prior approval from the Commission and the Corporation to sub-grant or subcontract program activities not previously approved in the application for funding. Programs must receive prior approval from both the Commission and Corporation to transfer the grant or to sub-grant to a different organization. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### **Equipment**

Programs may not purchase equipment costing more than \$5,000 with grant funds unless specified in the approved budget or application without prior approval from the Commission and the Corporation. All purchases of equipment and supplies should be handled in accordance with 45 CFR 2541 – “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments” or with 45 CFR 2543 – “Grants and Agreements with

institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and other Non-Profit Organizations.” For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### Matching Funds/Voluntary Cost Share

Programs must provide matching funds as agreed upon in the approved application and budget. At a minimum, Programs must meet the proposed level of match every quarter. Programs that do not meet this match at the end of the quarter should include comments on their fiscal reports (both the Periodic Expense Report and Financial Status Reports, when applicable) explaining why the match was not met and how the program will ensure it will meet the match requirement at the end of the next quarter. If comments are not included, a letter from the program addressing these two issues will be required.

Voluntary cost share is defined as cash or in-kind matching contributions that exceed the required minimum levels of match as noted above. Programs will be held accountable for meeting the amount of voluntary cost share they proposed in their application. Programs who cannot meet the proposed levels of voluntary cost share must submit a revised budget and budget narrative to the Commission and Corporation for approval. All programs are encouraged to raise funds from the private sector. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### Fiscal Reports

Report Type	Due Date
PER (Monthly)	20 <sup>th</sup> of each month
FFR (April – September)	October 20
FFR (October– March)	April 20

### Periodic Expense Reports (PERs)

AmeriCorps\*State programs must submit PERs on a **monthly** basis in the Serve Illinois Commission’s Online Reporting system, EGrAMS.

PERs from programs are due in EGrAMS no later than the **20<sup>th</sup> day** of each month for the prior month’s expenses. Should the 20<sup>th</sup> fall on a weekend, the reports are due the Friday before the weekend. The Commission will issue a reimbursement payment based on timely monthly expense reports submitted by programs. The monthly payments will result in year-to-date payments being equal to year-to-date reported expenditures, by program.

Failure to report monthly expenditures by the due date will result in a delay in issuing reimbursement payments. If you experience technical difficulties reporting in EGrAMS, please contact your Program Officer.

### Federal Financial Reports (FFRs)

FFRs are cumulative financial status reports used by the Corporation to monitor sub-grantee spending. AmeriCorps\*State programs must submit Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) in

EGrAMS semi-annually. **These reports are due October 20 and April 20 or upon approval of the PER submitted that month.**

The last FFR completed for each program year must be marked as a “Final FFR.” By marking a FFR as “Final,” there can be no further charges or expenses claimed against the program year. Whether the FFR is “final” is a specific question on the FFR form.

**NOTE:** There may likely be times when it will be necessary for a program to submit two PERs and two FFRs on the same due date. This happens when expenses are being incurred that are the result of two different program years, i.e., program Year Two and Year Three overlap. Programs should report expenses associated with each program year separately on program year-specific PERs or FFRs.

## Progress Reports

The completed APR/PROGRESS REPORT includes information on: progress toward performance measures, member and volunteer hours, program challenges, and any program changes. APR's are submitted semi-annually.

The APR is built from several components, in My AmeriCorps and EGrAMS, including:

MEMBER DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enrollment -My AmeriCorps</li> <li>■ Exits –My AmeriCorps</li> <li>■ Time Logs -EGrAMS</li> </ul>
APR MAP (EGrAMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Performance Measures</li> <li>■ Implementation Plans</li> <li>■ Outputs</li> <li>■ Outcomes</li> </ul>
GREAT STORIES (EGrAMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Member and/or Program Success Stories</li> </ul>

## Approving Performance Measures

Your Program Officer is responsible for approving performance measures in the APR Map after they have been entered by Program staff. Programs are unable to enter the necessary data to aggregate/roll up into their progress report to show progress toward their performance measures until approval is given.

## Corporation Support for Performance Measures

The Corporation has developed resource materials and tutorials to help grantees, sub-grantees and sponsors understand the CNCS performance measures.

You are encouraged to use this material to improve your understanding of key performance measurement concepts including:

- Performance Measurement Basics
- Theory of Change
- Evidence
- Quality Performance Measures
- Data Collection and Instruments

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement> **Final Reports**

Programs completing the final year of their three-year grant cycle must submit a Final Project Report in addition to their Progress Report due October 31 of each year. A Final Progress Report is a cumulative report covering the entire project period. This report is due January 20 following the end of the three-year grant cycle and should include the following information:

The narrative should include a three page, double-spaced summary of the qualitative accomplishments that the AmeriCorps grant has made for the duration of the grant period. Include a discussion of the impacts of any special initiatives that fall within this grant. Discuss what exists now in the communities that are served that did not exist prior to the grant. Use of quantitative data to support the impact statements is encouraged.

### **Final Federal Financial Report**

A program completing the final year of its three-year grant cycle must submit a final Federal Financial Report (FFR) that is cumulative over the entire project period. This FFR is due January 20 following the end of the three-year grant cycle. This Final FFR should be completed on the required form and on the EGrAMS reporting system. Please see Federal Financial Report (Standard Form 269A) included in this chapter.

### **Equipment and Supply Inventory Form**

Programs completing the final year of their three-year grant cycle must submit two (2) inventory forms. These are due March 1 following the end of the three-year grant cycle. One form is for any equipment inventory having a current fair market value of \$5,000 or more and purchased with federal grant funds. The second form is for any unused or residual supplies inventory purchased with federal funds exceeding \$5,000 in value. These reports should be completed on the Equipment and Supply Inventory Form included in this chapter. If no equipment or supplies were purchased using federal funds, programs should reflect this on each form. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

## Staff Timesheets

Staff timesheets play an important if not critical role in effectively managing program costs. Staff time keeping records must also be completed and maintained following federal requirements.

Under 2CFR 230 (formerly A-122), Federal guidelines and provisions require that Staff Timesheets which contain all salaries and wages charged to grants must be supported by signed timesheets and attendance records.

Staff timesheet reports and records maintained by the programs whether treated as direct or indirect costs must:

- Be maintained for all staff ( professional and nonprofessional)
- Reflect an after the fact determination of the employee actual activity (not budgeted activity)
- Account for the total activity of each employee
- Be signed by the employee or supervisor having first-hand knowledge
- Be prepared at least monthly and must coincide with one or more pay periods

Timesheets account for one of the largest expense line items. These time sheets are prone to error when not done in a timely fashion or by the honor system which allows for guesstimation of time. When done incorrectly, timesheets can consume staff time that could be used on other projects.

Time Sheet Requirements for Salaries, Wages and Fringe Benefits must be:

- Allowable
  - No unallowable activities
  - Consistent with policies and procedures and applied uniformly
  - Documented
- Reasonable
  - Ordinary and necessary for the operation of the grant
- Allocable
  - Incurred specifically for the grant and treated consistently with other costs
  - Not shifted to other Federal awards to overcome deficiency

Timesheets are necessary for understanding how your program is operating. Time sheets are not just for payroll. They are used for developing reports, employee management and even future budget proposals.

## Deductions to Living Allowances

Programs occasionally request the ability to deduct amounts from living allowances for member absences and other purposes. Programs may make deductions to living allowances or other payments made to AmeriCorps members; however, programs may not deduct any portion of the living allowance paid to the member by the Corporation.

Before making any deductions, programs are advised to consider the implications related to the

treatment of employment laws, including those laws addressing minimum wage and unemployment compensation. Further, programs that deduct amounts from member living allowances may be required to increase their match funds as a result.

For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

## Sustainability

The Serve Illinois Commission defines “sustainability” as a plan that, through an organization’s use of various resources, will provide for a stronger infrastructure, stronger programs, and community self-sufficiency in regards to supporting the needs of its constituents, its financial health, and its ability to be well managed and accountable.

### Sustainability Policy

Programs must also follow the Sustainability Policy. Each program is required to gradually decrease reliance on federal funds, while continuing to meet the minimum match requirements.

More information on these topics may be found in the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### Policy Guidelines

The Corporation for National and Community Service has published the following increasing match requirements for all AmeriCorps programs.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
<b>Minimum Overall Share</b>	24%	24%	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

Under this policy, each program is required to gradually decrease its reliance on federal funds, yet still meet the Overall Minimum Match requirements. By either cash or in-kind matches in any category, programs must reach the required match level each year. Please note that the Corporation has created an alternative match requirement for grantees located in either a rural or a severely economically distressed area prior to submitting their grant application.

The Commission will provide assistance to programs in the area of sustainability by sponsoring additional training and technical assistance on collaborations and partnerships, leadership, and fundraising, as needed.

### Policy Implementation

The intent of the policy on sustainability is to decrease program dependency on federal funds, to ensure that services provided by AmeriCorps members will continue if federal funding is discontinued, and to make more funding available to support new programs.



Each grantee must submit a Sustainability Plan as part of the initial application for funding. This plan must provide details on community outreach and collaborations, community, new partnerships, and new resources provided to, or received from, the community. Subsequently, a Sustainability Progress Report must be submitted with each Continuation Application showing the progress made that year in the Sustainability Plan.

## My AmeriCorps and EGrAMS

### Member Reporting Information

Programs need to know what is required of program/sites in terms of member data collection in order to monitor that they have met their reporting requirements. The specific CNCS rules as to when some of these forms must be completed are shown in the table below:

MEMBER FORM	DEADLINE
Member Commitment Tracker Forms	Immediately upon offer of a position (enrollment must follow < 30 days later)
Member Information Profiles	Must be completed before enrollment can be created
Member Site Assignment in Portal	Within 30 days of enrollment
Member Enrollment Forms	Within 30 days of enrollment
Change of Term/Status Forms	Within 30 days of change
Member Exit Forms	Within 30 days of exit
Member Timesheets	Submitted monthly in EGrAMS by the 20 <sup>th</sup> of the following.

These forms are created through the members My AmeriCorps Portal and approved by Program staff. It is important that member forms are completed in a timely manner. Timely completion could also play a role in future grant funding decisions, especially for competitively awarded funds.

Timesheets track hours served by members in direct service, fundraising and training. (Note: the average of member training hours can be no more than 20% per grantee. Member fundraising hours may be no more than 10% per person.) Timesheets need to be completed on a regular basis in order to ensure that the program/site is tracking member hours accurately as timesheets data is aggregated into the APR, and ultimately the GPR. It is critical that timesheets be up to date prior to the submission of these reports. Make sure all timesheets are signed and dated by both the Member and supervisor. Member timesheets must be uploaded into EGrAMS by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month.

My AmeriCorps and EGrAMS have tools to help programs monitor member progress. These tools can identify members who are falling behind and at risk of not being able to complete their

required number of hours of service to earn an education award before the end of the program year.

### **EGrAMS Due Dates**

Fiscal Reporting Requirements for AmeriCorps\*State Program Cycle 2009-10

**FFR** = Federal Financial Report (semi-annual)

**Progress Report** (semi-annual)

.....

<b>Report Type</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Progress Report (1 <sup>st</sup> )	April 3
Progress Report (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	October 2
Final FFR	January 20

### **IMPORTANT:**

Please understand that there may be times when it will be necessary to submit two FFRs on any given due date. This would occur when you are incurring expenses toward two separate program years during the same reporting period. You will report all expenses claimed under each program year accordingly – NOT together. One program year is not completed until the “Final FFR” has been completed.

The last FFR completed for each program year must be marked as a “Final FFR”. By marking an FFR as “Final”, there can be no further charges claimed toward the corresponding program year (This is a specific question on the FFR form).

### **Record Retention**

All financial records, supporting documentation, statistical records, evaluation and performance data, member information, and personnel records must be retained for three years after the final FFR submission or closeout document submission (whichever is later) of an AmeriCorps grant.

If any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit or other action involving the records has been started before the expiration of the 3-year period, the records must be retained on site until completion of the action and resolution of all issues which arise from it, or until the end of the regular 3-year period, whichever is later.

TYPE OF DOCUMENTATION	EXAMPLES
All Materials Related to the Grants Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ NOFAs</li> <li>■ RFPs or RFAs</li> <li>■ all applications received (not just those funded)</li> <li>■ all correspondence and notes from negotiations</li> <li>■ score sheets</li> <li>■ reviewer confidentiality/conflict of interest agreements</li> <li>■ CNCS approvals of awards</li> </ul>
Grant Agreements and Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Grants and contracts between State Commissions and grantees</li> <li>■ Grants and contracts between National Programs and sites</li> </ul>
Program Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reports</li> <li>■ Correspondence</li> <li>■ Policy Statements</li> </ul>
Monitoring Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Monitoring Reports</li> <li>■ Site visit tools</li> <li>■ Reports on site visits to grantees/sites</li> </ul>
Official Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Letters on Other Matters</li> </ul>

## Resources

AmeriCorps programs need to handle funds wisely. This includes developing written policies and procedures and internal controls and becoming familiar with Corporation and AmeriCorps provisions and regulations. Resources in this topic relate to budgets, FFR, GAAP, match, in-kind donations, fundraising, and the eGrants system.

For detailed information and help go to: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management/financial-and-grants-management-resources>.

# Program Monitoring

**Purpose of Program Monitoring**

**Monitoring Visits**

**Preparation**

**High-Risk Programs**

**High-Risk Site Visits**

**Monitoring Checklists**

**Desk-Based Monitoring**

**Member File Checklist**

**Member Service Agreement**

**Member Orientation**

**Site Monitoring**

**Program Close-Out**

**Program Evaluation**

## **Purpose of Program Monitoring**

State Service Commissions and National Programs face many challenges in administering AmeriCorps programs. Limited staff capacity, as well as varied and unique program models, can make monitoring and management particularly difficult. As stewards of public funding, the Serve Illinois Commission needs to ensure the programs they fund are aware of their contractual requirements and are in compliance with all of the rules, regulations, and provisions governing AmeriCorps funds. To accomplish this, the Commission Program Officer must create adequate systems for monitoring programs.

First year programs will receive a site visit by their Program Officer prior to the start of their first grant cycle. In addition, first year programs will be considered high risk and will also have a monitoring review scheduled during their first year.

Programs with staff changes, i.e. Program Director, will also be considered high risk and will have a monitoring review scheduled during the first year with the new staff.

Other factors that may determine if your program is at high risk, include, but are not limited to, late reporting, not participating in mandatory calls, trainings, and serious issues that arise during the Program Year, etc.

This approach helps to ensure high quality AmeriCorps programs are implemented while maximizing staff time and meeting the recommendations of the Inspector General in regards to program monitoring.

## **Monitoring Visits**

Based on a state or organization's risk-based monitoring strategy, a programmatic site visit may be made to every grantee or site one time per grant cycle, one time per year, or more often as may be appropriate. It is the goal of the Commission to complete monitoring visits to each program every year; however, this depends on staffing levels.

In most cases, on-site monitoring visits will be scheduled at least 30 days in advance. Your Program Officer will contact you to schedule the monitoring visit for your program.

## **Preparation**

To prepare properly for an on-site monitoring visit, your program staff should:

- Make certain appropriate staff will be available.
- Schedule host site visits and Member interviews in the afternoon.
- Understand that Program Directors are not included in the Member interviews.
- Review the Monitoring Tools provided by your Program Officer and be prepared to present the requested documentation.
- Make certain all required forms are in the Member files and in the order listed on the Monitoring Tool Module D.

- Verify that member time sheets are up to date and signed/dated by the Member and their immediate supervisor (from their host site).

Typical on-site activities during the Monitoring Review include the following:

1. Discussion with Program staff;
2. Member File documentation compliance check;
3. Financial compliance check;
4. Policy & Procedures compliance check;
5. Host site visit; and
6. Member interviews.

ACTIVITY	INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED
Discussion	Program Director & Staff
Member File Compliance Check	Program Director and/or Staff
Financial Compliance Check	Program Director & CFO
Policy & Procedures Compliance Check	Program Director
Host-Site Visit	Program Director & AmeriCorps Members
Member Interviews	AmeriCorps Members

The purpose of an on-site monitoring visit is to assess the program's compliance with federal regulations and to help the program improve systems to pass an OIG audit. Member files, program policies and fiscal records will be reviewed during the visit. The Serve Illinois AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument will be used to assess program compliance.

On-Site visits by program staff can have many purposes, some of the most important are summarized in the table below:

LEARNING	Finding out about AmeriCorps grantees'/sites' service activities and community partnerships.
PUBLICITY	Hearing success stories.
COMPLIANCE	Assuring that all federal, state, local, contractual, and organization-specific regulations, policies, and provisions are being followed.
MONITORING PROGRESS	Comparing actual outputs and outcomes to the performance measures outlined in a grantee/site contract.
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	To improve overall quality of the program.

During the on-site monitoring visit, your Program Officer will use the following modules of the Serve Illinois AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument:

### **Module A: Reporting and Communication Compliance and Early Issue Detection**

Portions of this Module will be completed by your Program Officer prior to the monitoring visit using information provided in eGRANTS. Results will be reviewed with the program and important issues or concerns will be discussed. Programs that are not performing in this area must show improvement and demonstrate a commitment to improving. Any concerns in this area will be addressed in the site visit feedback letter and a corrective action plan to improve future performance will be required.

### **Module B: Financial Compliance**

The majority of this module will be completed with the assistance of the program's fiscal staff, but some questions will most likely be answered by program staff. Programs should have copies of their expenditure forms and the Federal Financial Reports submitted via EGrAMS available for review. A copy of the program's final approved budget should also be available. In general, a program must have all required documentation for each item on the list.

### **Module C: Policies and Procedures Compliance**

All programs must be in compliance with all of the policies and procedures listed in Module C. Documentation and/or proof of compliance is necessary in case of an audit. Programs must have all documentation listed for this compliance check readily accessible to your Program Officer during the monitoring review.

## Module D: Member Documentation Compliance

Your Program Officer is required to review ten percent (10%) or ten (10) Member Files, whichever is greater. If your program has 40 members, 10 Member Files are required to be reviewed. If your program has 300 members, 30 Member Files are required to be reviewed.

Member files are reviewed to determine if required documentation is being kept by the program. Proof of compliance is necessary in case of an audit. Your Program Officer will randomly select the member files to be reviewed. All member files reviewed must contain the required documentation and be placed in order in the member file as listed on the MODULE D: Member Documentation Compliance form. In addition, each member file must have the Member File Coversheet along with the completed documents attached to it.

\*See [Attachment #9. Program Review Instrument \[PDF, 1.35 MB\]](#)

\*See Attachment #2. Member Service Agreement Template

\*See Attachment #16. Member File Coversheet

### Review Outcome

An AmeriCorps Program Review will be sent to the Program Director and/or designee by your Program Officer which may request additional documents. Programs will have 10 working days to respond with the requested documentation showing full compliance. Once the review is completed, the Program Officer will notify the Program Director and/or designee in writing that the monitoring review has been completed and all issues have been resolved. Copies of all completed forms and correspondence sent to the SIC Program Officer will be kept in the program file.

Programs that are not performing must show improvement and demonstrate a commitment to improving. Any concerns in this area will be addressed in the Program Review and a corrective action plan to improve future performance will be required.

### High Risk Programs

Programs designated as high risk or who request a site visit to focus on specific issues may receive additional visits.

High risk factors may include, but are not limited to:

- A first year program
- A change in program director or other key staff
- Legitimate member complaints to the Commission
- Poor past performance by the program (based on progress reports and/or previous site visits)
- Concerns regarding prohibited activities
- Compliance with reporting deadlines and Financial Compliance Issues



These visits will be conducted on an on-going basis throughout the program year. High Risk on-site visits may not be scheduled 30 days in advance. These visits will occur when issues are brought to the attention of the Program Officer. Commission staff will determine the need for a High risk on-site visit.

### **High Risk Site Visits**

High risk on-site visits are conducted to provide targeted assistance on specific issues or concerns.

First year programs will receive an on-site visit by their Program Officer and/or SIC Staff prior to the start of their first grant cycle. In addition, first year programs will be considered high risk and will also have a monitoring review scheduled during their first year.

Programs with key staff changes will also be considered high risk and will have an on-site monitoring review scheduled during the first year with the new staff.

Other factors that may determine if your program is at high risk, include, but are not limited to, late reporting, not participating in mandatory calls, trainings, serious issues that arise during the program year, etc.

For program-related visits being conducted because of high risk factors, the agenda will be determined by the reason for the visit. For example, the agenda for a visit that is being held because of a change in program director will focus on expectations of programs, AmeriCorps regulations and relationship building. The agenda for a visit that is being conducted because of concerns regarding prohibited activities will focus on meeting with members, site supervisors, and program staff to assess whether prohibited activities were taking place and to ensure that prohibited activities do not occur in the future.

A Program Review will be completed for each High Risk On-Site Visit.

### **Desk-Based Monitoring**

While an on-site monitoring visit can provide a valuable, direct view of a program's operations, it is a resource-intensive form of monitoring. Desk-based monitoring is more sparing of scarce resources of staff time and money and, properly used, can actually forestall the need for more intensive intervention later on to resolve grantee problems.

Throughout the year, your Program Officer manages each program in their portfolios. Areas that require your Program Officers attention include:

- Reviewing and approving performance measures
- Reviewing timeliness of reporting
- Reviewing program participation in required calls, trainings, service days & Recognition Day
- Reviewing each program/site's progress on member recruitment and retention

- Tracking member progress toward completing service hours
- Conducting member enrollment queries
- Review progress towards performance measures

Your Program Officer will also utilize EGrAMS as an effective management and monitoring tool. For instance, through EGrAMS, it is possible to:

- **Review and approve monthly expense reports**
- **Review and approve FFRs**
- **Review member timesheets**
- **Check timeliness of financial reports.**

### Member File Coversheet

The Member File Cover Sheet is a **required** form that is be used in all member files by all programs. This mandatory form must be placed at the top or the beginning of the member file. This form not only serves as a checklist for all the items that are required to be in the member file but it also serves a tool to help you keep all the items in the proper order and sequence. It is a working sheet that will be updated and completed during the course of the member's service and will serve as a quick reference on nearly all aspects of member information. It is also a valuable tool to help you with retrieval of information and will be helpful to the Commission during reviews and monitoring of member files.

See Attachment #16 Member File Coversheet

### Member Service Agreement

As stated in Chapter 3, the Member Service Agreement (MSA) is a critical part of administering AmeriCorps programs. The Member Service Agreement provides the legal basis or contract by which the terms, conditions and rules regarding participation are delineated. This contract between the program and member is the legal document which would be used to resolve any issues between the program and a member. Because of its importance, The Commission has developed a template for the programs to use. The template includes all the required provisions required by the Corporation. **Programs are required to use the MSA for each member.**

Programs will need to complete various parts of the Agreement to make it specific to the member's service. Programs will also need to attach/insert the position description to the Agreement. Signed and completed Member Service Agreements are required to be in each members file.

### Member Orientation

Orientation materials should also be reviewed carefully to ensure the grantee has provided members with appropriate training for beginning their term of service. We have provided you with a SIC AmeriCorps Member Orientation (required items) Checklist. Please use this checklist to make certain all required topics are covered during your Orientation.

See Attachment #1. AmeriCorps Member Orientation Checklist

### **Recruitment/Retention Monitoring Tool**

In light of the CNCS standards for member enrollment and retention, it is important for your Program Officer to monitor their grantees/sites closely to keep track of how they are doing in these areas. The standards are:

ENROLLMENT RATE = Total slots filled/total slots awarded.

**Enrollment for programs should be 100%.**

RETENTION RATE = Total members exiting with an Education Award/total slots filled.

**A target of 90% for retention or completion is desired.**

CNCS realizes that many programs not yet meeting these rates are nevertheless performing well in their individual circumstances. Also, retention may vary among effective programs depending on the target populations for those programs. However, in order to leverage limited program dollars, CNCS expects programs to strive toward improving their rates of enrollment and retention. During the application process, programs that are not meeting these standards need to offer a rationale for why not, as appropriate.

### **Recruitment/Retention Rate Calculation**

To calculate enrollment and retention using the data in My AmeriCorps:

1. Log into your eGrants account
2. Select S/N Reports
3. Select Report via pull down menu
4. Select Program year
5. Select format (PDF, Excel etc.)
6. Select Submit
7. You may print the report created

### **Program Close-Out**

The Corporation grants are usually awarded for a three year Project Period, consisting of three yearly budget periods. The Serve Illinois Commission is required to submit documentation of program close-outs to the Corporation.

**The following Final Close-Out reports are due to your Program Officer within 60 days after the close of your 3 year grant cycle. (*Close out begins once all of your Members have completed their term of service.*)**

### Final Project Report

The narrative should include a three page, double-spaced summary of the qualitative accomplishments that the AmeriCorps grant has made for the duration of the grant period. Include a discussion of the impacts of any special initiatives that fall within this grant. Discuss what exists now in the communities that are served that did not exist prior to this grant. Quantitative data may be used to support the impact statements. This report is not submitted via EGrAMS.

### Final Federal Financial Report

A program completing the final year of its three-year grant cycle, must submit a final Federal Financial Report (FFR) that is cumulative over the entire project period. This FFR is due within 60 days after the end of the project period. This Final FFR should be completed on the required form and not in EGrAMS.

### Equipment and Supply Inventory Form

A program completing the final year of its three-year grant cycle must submit two (2) inventory forms. One for any equipment inventory with a current fair market value of \$5,000 or more purchased with federal grant funds. The second form for unused/residual supplies inventory purchased with federal funds exceeding \$5000. Reports should be completed on the required forms. If no equipment or supplies were purchased, forms should reflect such. For more information please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### IDPH Grant Close-Out

At the end of each IDPH grant period, providers will be required to complete a “Grant Reconciliation Form”. This form will be provided to the Grantee upon completion of the IDPH grant period.

*\*See Attachments:*

*#10. Federal Financial Report*

*#11. Equipment Inventory*

*#12. Inventory of Residual Supplies*

*#13. Certification of Subgrant Closeout*

### **Program Evaluation**

As articulated in the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR §§ 2522.700-740, all AmeriCorps State and National grantees that receive an average annual Corporation grant of \$500,000 or more must conduct an independent evaluation. An independent evaluation uses an external evaluator who has no formal or personal relationship with, or stake in the administration, management, or finances of the grantee or of the program to be evaluated.

All other AmeriCorps State and National grantees must conduct an internal evaluation. An internal evaluation is designed and conducted by qualified program staff or other stakeholders, such as board members, partners, or volunteer affiliates.

If you are a...	You will submit an...
State formula program	Internal evaluation
State competitive program with an average annual Corporation grant of \$500,000 or more	Independent evaluation
State competitive program with an average annual Corporation grant under \$500,000	Internal evaluation

If you are recompeting for the first time, you are required to submit “a summary of your evaluation efforts or plan to date, and a copy of any evaluation that has been completed, as part of your application for funding” ([45 CFR § 2522.730](#)). If you are recompeting again, you are required to submit a completed evaluation with your application. The Corporation will consider the results of your evaluation “in assessing the quality and outcomes of your program” ([45 CFR § 2522.470](#)).

If you receive an average of \$500,000 or more per year from the Corporation, averaged over the last three years of funding you have received before you recompet, we expect you to conduct an independent evaluation by contracting with an external evaluator. The AmeriCorps regulations describe how this evaluation should provide evidence of a causal relationship between program activities and outcomes ([45 CFR § 2522.700](#)). You may consider using an experimental or quasi-experimental design, or compare your results with national/state/local data. Your external evaluation method should match the size, scale, and purpose of your program.

In our ongoing effort to reduce burden on grantees, especially those with smaller grants, grantees an average annual grant under \$500,000 may submit an internal evaluation. The primary difference between the independent evaluations that grantees that receive \$500,000 or over are required to submit and the internal evaluation is who conducts the evaluation study. Your own staff and other stakeholders can serve as internal evaluators.

We encourage you to design your internal evaluation so that it will yield data most useful to you. You may opt for an impact evaluation, or you may conduct a process or management evaluation. You are not required to conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation that proves causality, which is required of grantees that receive \$500,000 or over, although you are allowed to conduct this type of study. We expect the same high quality that we expect of a larger grantee, regardless of the type of evaluation you decide to conduct.

# Attachments

1. AmeriCorps Member Orientation Checklist
2. Member Service Agreement Template
3. Member Enrollment Form
4. Member Exit Form
5. Grievance Procedure Review Checklist
6. Sample Member Timesheet
7. Federal Register, DOCID fr20ap01-79
8. Illinois Administrative Rules, Section 2732.215
9. Program Review Instrument
10. Federal Financial Report
11. Equipment Inventory
12. Inventory of Residual Supplies
13. Certification of Subgrant Closeout
14. Criminal History Authorization Form
15. Illinois AmeriCorps\*State Member Early Exit Form
16. Member File Coversheet
17. AmeriCorps Dates to Remember

Available at <http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/manual.aspx>